Dennis R. MacDonald

# The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark

DENNIS R. MACDONALD

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To Amy

λίην γὰρ πινυτή τε καὶ εὖ φρεσὶ μήδεα οἶδε.

Homer *Odyssey* 11.445

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# *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*

# I

## *Mark and Mimesis*

One morning in the spring of 1990 I woke early to prepare a lecture on the Gospel of Mark. My files archived several perfectly acceptable lectures on this, the earliest gospel, but because much about it remained enigmatic to me, and because many widely held scholarly positions had failed to satisfy me, I wanted to give myself the leisure—and a pot of coffee—to mull it afresh. The subsequent reading of Mark would revolutionize my understanding of the gospels, but because it called into question much of conventional gospel scholarship, I thought it prudent not to present my newly won insights without further testing. I gave one of my older lectures with a nagging suspicion that I was depriving my students of a significant aspect of Marcan composition. In this book I attempt to redress the wrong done my students that morning by developing as best I can the discovery that so startled me in 1990.

I read Mark differently that morning because of my research on the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew.* On the surface, this *Acts* reads like other apocryphal Acts: the apostle travels about preaching, exorcising, healing, and opposing wicked, often lovesick, political authorities, and in the end offers his life in martyrdom. At a deeper level, however, the *Acts of Andrew* is an allegory. The author peppered the narrative with clues that his characters play roles derived from classical Greek literature. Andrew himself appropriates the virtues of Greek notables like Heracles, Achilles, Hector, Socrates, and especially Odysseus, whereas most other

characters represent the vices of Greek gods and heroes. The *Acts* is a "transvaluative hypertext" of several of the most popular literary works from Greek antiquity, above all the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.*

According to the literary critic Gérard Genette, a hypertext is any text that relies somehow on a written antecedent, or hypotext.[1] A hypertext becomes transvaluative when it not only articulates values different from those of its targeted hypotext but also substitutes its values for those in its antecedent. I once bought my daughter a book entitled *Sleeping Ugly,* a hypertext of *Sleeping Beauty* that transvalued the fairy tale by replacing its patriarchy with a feminist perspective. Scholars of early Christian literature later than the New Testament have observed a similar phenomenon in *Kontrastimitationen* of classical authors, imitations of pagan models that contrast the content of the originals with those of the Christian copies.[2]

The *Acts of Andrew* replaced the violence, greed, lust, and physical imperfections of Greek gods and heroes with the virtues of idealized Christians: ersatz-Zeus stops chasing women, ersatz-Ares abandons his weapons, ersatz-Aphrodite and ersatz-Helen embrace continence, ersatz-Oedipus forswears sex with his mother, ersatz-Heracles no longer is crazed. Andrew cures ersatz-Hephaestus of his lameness, ersatz-Tiresias of his blindness, and ersatz-Philoctetes of his festering wound. The apostle, who had been a fisherman and whose name means "manliness," dies at the edge of the sea, tied to his cross like Odysseus tied to the mast. Every episode in the *Acts* corresponds to some scene of Greek mythology, except those that rely instead on Plato's depiction of Socrates. I published my analysis of Andrew's *Acts* in 1994 as *Christianizing Homer: "The Odyssey," Plato, and "The Acts of Andrew."*

Colleagues who knew that I was working on this project often asked if I saw such Homeric influence on the New Testament; invariably I said no. After all, those who had studied the role of epic in the early church observed that no Christian author referred to Homer or quoted from the epics before Justin Martyr (mid-second century) and have concluded from this silence that he in no way influenced the New Testament or other early Christian texts.[3] When later Christian authors mentioned the bard, they did so to lambaste his gods for their adulteries, murders, lies, and thefts.

But soon after I began rereading Mark that morning, I noticed echoes of the *Odyssey*—parallels between Jesus and Odysseus, then between Jesus' disciples and Odysseus's crew, then between the Jewish authorities and Penelope's suitors, and then between entire episodes in the two works. Both the epic and the Gospel demonstrated a fascination with the sea, suffering, secrecy, and the victories of their heroes over their arrogant and murderous foes. The following summer, while continuing to work on the *Acts of Andrew,* I determined to settle my

disquiet about Mark. My faint suspicions turned into convictions that the author of the earliest gospel indeed used the *Odyssey* as his primary literary inspiration but also imitated Books 22 and 24 of the *Iliad* for narrating Jesus' death and burial. Sometimes the similarities obtain even at the level of word choice and minor plot elements. Furthermore, I have come to conclude that Mark wanted his readers to detect his transvaluation of Homer.

Reading Mark as a Homeric hypertext permits a new solution to the vexing problem of the kind of book Mark intended to write. Earlier scholarship viewed Mark as a passive transcriber of tradition and his gospel as a product of oral-traditional memories of Jesus, but subsequent studies have demonstrated Mark's artful and thorough redaction of traditions into a coherent literary work, his use of written sources (perhaps even Q, the hypothetical source Matthew and Luke used in addition to Mark), and his sophisticated development of characterization and plot. Mark must have used one or more literary models, and the quest for them has focused on identifying texts closest to Mark's genre, the elusive Holy Grail of gospel studies. Scholars have wandered through ancient literature searching for analogs and have returned with several suggestions: Jewish martyrologies, Plato's death of Socrates, Greek tragedies, aretalogies, folk literature, historical novels, and biographies.[4] The most popular solution avers that Mark intended to write a biography of sorts but was humbugged by the unreliable, legendary traditions available to him. In this book I argue, however, that the key to Mark's composition has less to do with its genre than with its imitation of specific texts of a different genre: Mark wrote a prose epic modeled largely after the *Odyssey* and the ending of the *Iliad*.[5]

Mark's Jesus shares much with Hector and, even more so, with Odysseus. Odysseus and Jesus both sail seas with associates far their inferiors, who weaken when confronted with suffering. Both heroes return home to find it infested with murderous rivals that devour the houses of widows. Both oppose supernatural foes, visit dead heroes, and prophesy their own returns in the third person. A wise woman anoints each protagonist, and both eat last suppers with their comrades before visiting Hades, from which both return alive. In both works one finds gods stilling storms and walking on water, meals for thousands at the shore, and monsters in caves. Furthermore, Mark's dependence on the *Odyssey* suggests elegant solutions to some of the most enigmatic and disputed aspects of the Gospel: its depiction of the disciples as inept, greedy, cowardly, and treacherous; its interests in the sea, meals, and secrecy; and even its mysterious reference to the unnamed young man who fled naked at Jesus' arrest. But Mark did not steal from the epics, he transvalued them by making Jesus more virtuous and powerful than Odysseus and Hector. Like Hector, Jesus dies at the end of the book, his corpse is rescued from his executioner, and he is mourned by three women. But unlike

Hector, Jesus is raised from the dead. Mark may have cut his literary teeth on epic, which also might explain a major incongruity in his composition: despite its rustic, at times barbaric Greek, the Gospel's literary achievement is brilliant. Some of Mark's brilliance, I submit, is Homeric radiation.

Because of Homer's unrivaled hegemony in ancient education, such imitations were common. Youngsters learned their ABΓs by identifying them in epic poetry, and only after demonstrating facility with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were they promoted to other books.[6] Although it would be hyperbolic to call the epics a Bible for the Greeks, they did function as encyclopedias of religion, history, and culture. Even Plato, no friend of Homer, had to admit that "this poet educated Greece."[7] One catalogue of manuscripts from Greco-Roman Egypt lists 604 of Homer, not including scholia, anthologies, or commentaries. In a distant second place is Demosthenes with 83, then Euripides, with 77, Hesiod with 72, and Plato with 42.[8]

Students in ancient schools learned to write largely through *mimesis* or its Latin equivalent, *imitatio*. "One might say that from his entry into the home of the school master, the good student of antiquity was taken into a mechanism that would surely make of him an author trained in the rules of Mimesis."[9] Quintilian wrote to other teachers of rhetoric: "[T]here can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in *imitatio,* since, although invention came first and is all-important, it is expedient to follow whatever has been invented with success."[10]

The favorite target for imitation was Homeric epic, especially for the writing of poetry, as in the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, the *Aeneid* by Vergil, the *Posthomerica* by Quintus Smyrnaeus, and the *Dionysiaca* by Nonnos of Panopolis. Even Jewish poets imitated Homer, such as in the surviving fragments of *On the Jews* by Theodotus and *On Jerusalem* by Philo Epicus, both of whom narrated Jewish themes in dactylic hexameters.[11] An obscure medieval note states that a certain "Sosates, the Jewish Homer, flourished in Alexandria" between 142 and 51 B.C.E.[12]

No Christian poet seems to have imitated Homeric meter before the late third century, the date assigned a peculiar text among the Bodmer Papyri. This *Vision of Dorotheus,* consisting of 343 lines of dactylic hexameters, narrates the author's vision of events in heaven in transparent dependence on the *Iliad.* The author identifies himself as "son of Quintus the poet," probably Quintus Smyrnaeus, the author of the *Posthomerica,* an epic poem filling the gaps between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.*[13] Although the *Vision of Dorotheus* imitates the *Iliad,* it rejects violence outright, probably a conscious transvaluation. Many later Christian poets would express their religious views by imitating Homer's verse, including Apollinarius of Laodicea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ps.-Nonnos, and Empress Eudocia.

Imitations of Homer were common in prose as well; students learned to imitate across genres, especially by paraphrasing epic into prose. Examples of such paraphrases appear among surviving school writing exercises, including at least one by a Christian.[14] Quintilian supposed his readers would have taken this activity for granted: "I think we shall all agree that this [paraphrasing] is specially valuable with regard to poetry; indeed, it is said that the paraphrase of poetry [into prose] was the sole form of exercise employed by [the rhetor] Sulpicius."[15] The *littérateur* Philodemus asked, "Who would claim that the writing of prose is not reliant on the Homeric poems?"[16]

Prose authors imitated the *Odyssey* more frequently than any other book of the ancient world. It was supplemented, parodied, burlesqued, dramatized, prosified, and transformed to serve an array of un-Homeric values. Several scenes of the epic became set-pieces, or *topoi,* in ancient literary composition, for example, the shipwrecks, Circe, the Sirens, the *nekyia* (visit to the netherworld), Polyphemus, and the *Phaiakis.*[17] Particularly relevant to the New Testament is the influence the *Odyssey* exerted on the ancient historical novel, the "epic of the Hellenistic period, fulfilling the functions of epic in a new age, and assuming some of its techniques."[18] Evidence of Odyssean influence is apparent in novels by Chariton, Longus, Iambulus, Antonius Diogenes, Philostratus, Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus, and especially Petronius, Lucian, and Apuleius, as well as the anonymous *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre.*[19]

No limits obtained to what features of the hypotext an author might imitate: its genre, characterizations, type-scenes, poetic conventions, distinctive motifs. Imitative reliance on the "classical tradition did not stifle or constrain originality according to the ancient point of view, because the type of imitation it evolved was in no sense plagiaristic and only sporadically was close verbal imitation employed."[20]

Imitations of Homer, especially of the *Odyssey,* appear also in Jewish prose. The author of the Book of Tobit borrowed extensively from the epic, though he surely did not expect his Aramaic readers to suspect his Greek model. The writings of Josephus display several possible imitations of the epics, and in some cases one suspects that he expected his readers to detect and appreciate his free adaptations.[21]

Texts discussing rhetorical imitations frequently mention the practice of occulting or disguising one's reliance on a model, for servile imitation could lead to charges of boorish pedantry and even of plagiarism. These disguises included altering the vocabulary, varying the order, length, and structure of sentences, improving the content, and generating a series of formal transformations.[22] Although students usually imitated a single work, the experienced author borrowed from many, like the painter Zeuxis, who, when commissioned to paint a portrait

of Helen, assembled the most beautiful girls of a city and from their combined features composed a "perfect image."[23] Such eclecticism also disguised reliance on the primary target of imitation. Skilled authors were bees that took the best nectar from many blossoms to produce textual honey. According to Seneca, such apian authors should "blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came." One achieves the height of imitation, however, when "the true copy stamps its own form upon all the features which it has drawn from what we may call the original" so that "it is impossible for it to be seen who is being imitated."[24]

The most sophisticated form of ancient imitation, however, was ζῆλος, or *aemulatio*, "rivalry." Such emulations announce, albeit subtly, their reliance on their model, and at the same time attempt "to speak better."[25] The observant reader, noticing the markers, will compare the model or hypotext with the hypertext and perhaps judge the imitation superior, whether in literary expression, philosophical acuity, or religious power. Many ancient imitations of Homeric epics fall into this category, whether the emulations are parodies, like the *Batrachomyomachia* or *Margites*, or Latin philosophical belletristics, like the *Aeneid*. The success of these transvaluations required the reader to detect the presence of the hypotext, and to this end the author supplied hypertextual clues. Favorite flags for hypertextuality in prose were signifying names. Petronius expected his readers to make the proper associations when they confronted his characters Menelaus, Agamemnon, and Circe. His characters frequently parodied Homer's, contrasting epic nobility with the flabby hedonism of contemporary Romans.[26]

In this book I argue that Mark's imitations of Homeric epic both occult and disclose, simultaneously conceal and reveal. The earliest evangelist disguised his dependence by writing in prose, altering Homeric vocabulary, rearranging episodes, and borrowing as well from Jewish scriptures.[27] Like Seneca's bee, he blended "several flavours into one delicious compound." But Mark was no slave to his models; rather, he thoroughly, cleverly, and strategically emulated these stories to depict Jesus as more compassionate, powerful, noble, and inured to suffering than Odysseus. Though Jesus' death resembled Hector's, he returned from the dead leaving an empty tomb. Nearly every episode with parallels in the epics displays such theological rivalry. Mark provided several pointers to the epics to inform the reader of his "teasing play . . . between revelation and concealment."[28] Unfortunately, these flags seem to have been invisible to actual readers, even to a sophisticated Greek like the author of the Gospel of Luke. Mark was long on concealing, short on revealing.

This failure of detection need not invalidate the claim that Mark imitated the epics, for mimesis is a delicate even risky undertaking. There is no "tidy 'philolog-

ical contract' between author and reader. The ideal reader who sees exactly the same clues . . . as the author, and constructs them in the same order and in the same way, will always in the final analysis be unattainable. This would not cease to be true even if we had access to the author's first readers (and to the most attentive and well-read among them)."[29] Readers for two thousand years apparently have been blind to this important aspect of Mark's project. The earliest evangelist was not writing a historical biography, as many interpreters suppose, but a novel, a prose anti-epic of sorts.

More striking than the similarities between the epics and the Gospel are their differences: poetry versus prose, mythical heroes versus a historical hero, many gods versus one god, and on and on. These differences are significant, but they are precisely what one would expect. Homer and Mark wrote in vastly different literary, cultural, religious, and political environments; they had widely divergent literary objectives. These differences require no special explanation, but the frequent parallels between the epics and the Gospel cry out for explanation.

One might reasonably view some of the similarities as accidental agreements or as literary commonplaces. The poet's unparalleled hegemony in Greek education ensured his influence on a wide range of texts and on ancient Mediterranean cultures generally; thus, some parallels between Mark and Homer may be due to Mark's Greek cultural identity and nothing more. But I am arguing for more; several parallel passages suggest deliberate transvaluative interplay with the epics, whether Mark worked from manuscript or from memory.[30]

Scholars who study intertextual referencing, such as allusions, parodies, and imitations, long have recognized the subjectivity of the enterprise and have addressed the problem in several ways. On the one hand are philological fundamentalists who require unmistakable markers of dependence, such as shared vocabulary, similar genres, and distinctive grammatical or poetic constructions. Similarities that do not meet these criteria are considered accidental confluences, or topoi. A *topos* is a convention of speech or composition, a commonplace. "[R]ather than demanding interpretation in relation to a specific model or models, . . . the *topos* invokes its intertextual tradition as a collectivity, to which the individual contexts and connotations of individual prior instances are firmly subordinate."[31] In other words, when observing similarities between ancient texts, a scholar may dismiss them as independent occurrences of a topos rather than investigate them as potential evidence of intertextuality. Philological fundamentalists appeal to topoi when parallels do not satisfy their rigid criteria, criteria that conform neither to ancient discussions of imitation nor to the vast majority of actual imitations.

At the other extreme are literary universalists, interpreters who argue that meaning occurs in the act of reading. The reader, equipped with a treasury of

information from many texts, makes intertextual associations even though the author may not have intended them. Indeed, the author is a hermeneutical irrelevance. Those using this approach need be no more interested in comparing Mark with ancient literature than with *Finnegans Wake*.

Other theorists attempt to test similarities between texts with criteria more flexible than those required by the fundamentalists, more consonant with rhetorical education, more attentive to the remarkable variety of ancient intertextuality, and more sensitive to the delicate interplay between occulting and emulative disclosing. Unfortunately, no list of criteria, however sophisticated, can altogether clarify the fuzzy logic of intertextual referencing. Criteria are tests, not laws.

I developed the following criteria from my work on the *Acts of Andrew* and from reading other scholars working on similar problems, including those who investigate allusions to Jewish scriptures in the New Testament and allusions to classical texts in Latin poetry.[32] The criteria are accessibility, analogy, density, order, distinctiveness, and interpretability.

The criterion accessibility, or availability, assesses the likeliness that the author had access to the hypotext. The more widespread the proposed target of imitation, the stronger the case for imitation. The parallels identified in this volume invariably satisfy this criterion. "If a Greek owned any books—that is, papyrus rolls—he was almost as likely to own the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as anything from the rest of Greek literature."[33] Many of the stories in Mark with parallels in Homeric epic were commonplace in Greek culture. Homer was in the air that Mark's readers breathed.

The second criterion, analogy, seeks to place the proposed Homeric parallels within a tradition of imitations of the same model. The more often ancient authors imitated a particular story, characterization, or plot element, the more likely the case that Mark did too. Conversely, the case for rewriting is weaker if no one else imitated this aspect of the epic.

Density, criterion three, pertains to the volume of contacts between two texts. Density is determined by bulk, not by count; parallels between two texts may be numerous but trivial, such as "he said," "they went," "she replied." Not even a legion of such parallels would demonstrate imitation. On the other hand, as few as two or three weighty similarities may suffice. The fourth criterion, order, is related to density insofar as it assesses the sequence of the parallels. The more often two texts share content in the same order, the stronger the case for literary dependence.

The fifth criterion is distinctiveness. Occasionally two texts contain distinguishing characteristics, such as peculiar characterizations, or a sudden, unexpected change of venue, or an unusual word or phrase. Some interpreters con-

sider this the best test of dependence, "where a rare word or expression in one passage picks up a corresponding rarity in a predecessor passage, serving thus as an unequivocal marker of allusion."[34] Frequently these rarities are flags for readers to compare the imitating texts with their models.[35]

The final criterion is interpretability, or intelligibility, the capacity of the proposed hypotext to make sense of the hypertext. This may include the solution to a peculiar problem that has eluded other explanations. It also may include emulation, or transvaluation. Can one understand why the author targeted the particular antecedent and how she transformed it to serve her own ends? Marcan imitations frequently satisfy this criterion by exalting Jesus at the expense of the vices or weakness of the heroes in their models. Criteria one and two are environmental, having to do with literary activity in the author's cultural milieu. Criteria three, four, and five test for similarities between two texts, including potential flags of literary dependence. This sixth criterion, however, looks for differences between texts as evidence of emulation.

In this volume I will present texts in parallel columns in a manner unfamiliar to some readers. The parallels seldom are word-for-word, as they often are among the Synoptic Gospels. Occasionally the same or a similar Greek word occurs in both texts (when they do, they appear in parentheses), but for the most part the parallels pertain to motifs and plot elements. Such similarities are more difficult to detect than the verbal parallels between Mark and Matthew or Luke, and they place special demands on the reader: patience, generosity, and, above all, imagination. Ancient imitations almost never were as wooden with their sources as Matthew and Luke were with Mark and thus require a more generous eye for appreciating them.[36]

Some parallels between Homer and Mark inevitably will be weaker than others, but the same is true, for example, of parallels between Mark and Luke. Even though few scholars today doubt that Luke rewrote Mark, many parallels between the two works are so weak that interpreters have doubted any genetic, literary relationship between them at all. Even a large number of such weak associations, however, cannot jeopardize the general thesis that Luke rewrote Mark. Rather, the opposite is true: the clearer examples lend plausibility to the fainter. Viewing the front range of the Rocky Mountains from my window, I see clearly the horizon created by the closest peaks, but the mountains in the distance become increasingly faint, so that sometimes I cannot be certain whether the sky's border results from a mountain, a cloud, or my imagination.

One could illustrate these six criteria on a host of ancient imitations, but I have chosen an example with direct relevance to the Gospel of Mark. The following tale appears in Acts 20:7–12.

> On the first day of the week, when we convened to break bread, Paul spoke to them, and because he wanted to leave the next day, he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were plenty of lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. A certain young man named Eutychus was seated at the window and was carried off by a deep sleep, because of Paul's having spoken for so long. Carried off by sleep, he fell from the third story and was lifted up dead. Paul went down, lay upon him, embraced him, and said, "Don't raise a ruckus! His soul is in him." Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and once he had eaten and had spoken for a long time, until dawn, he left. Then they took the lad, alive, and were not a little relieved.

This story displays uncanny similarities to Homer's characterization of Elpenor.[37] After having spent a year with the goddess Circe on her island home of Aeaea, Odysseus insisted on continuing his journey back to Ithaca. Circe provided a lavish dinner prior to the embarkation, and Odysseus spent the night with her, learning the magic he would need to summon from the dead the blind seer Tiresias, who could tell him how to find his way home. At break of day Odysseus woke his crew from their deep, dinner-induced sleep to sail at once for their rendezvous with the dead. All sailed off but Elpenor. Odysseus speaks:

> There was a man, Elpenor, the youngest in our ranks,
> none too brave in battle, none too sound in mind.
> He'd strayed from his mates in Circe's magic halls
> and keen for the cool night air,
> sodden with wine he'd bedded down on her roofs.
> But roused by the shouts and tread of marching men,
> he leapt up with a start at dawn but still so dazed
> he forgot to climb back down again by the long ladder—
> headfirst from the roof he plunged, his neck snapped
> from the backbone, his soul flew down to the house of Hades.[38]

Oblivious to Elpenor's death, Odysseus sailed to the edge of the world, where he performed necromantic magic to call forth the soul of Tiresias. To Odysseus's horror, the first soul to meet him was that of Elpenor, who told the hero how he had died and begged him to burn his corpse in full armor and bury his ashes with due rites.

> Don't sail off
> and desert me, left behind unwept, unburied, don't,
> or my curse may draw god's fury on your head.
> No, burn me in full armor, all my harness,
> heap my mound by the churning gray surf—
> a man whose luck ran out—
> so even men to come will learn my story.

> Perform my rites, and plant on my tomb that oar
> I swung with mates when I rowed among the living.[39]

Odysseus promised.

Indeed, after he had won his traveling instructions from Tiresias, seen a host of the dead, and witnessed the punishments of the wicked, Odysseus returned to Aeaea, where he beached the ship at night. Odysseus told King Alcinous of the Phaeacians what happened next.

> As soon as Dawn with her rosy-fingers shone again
> I dispatched some men to Circe's halls to bring
> the dead Elpenor's body. We cut logs in haste
> and out on the island's sharpest jutting headland
> held his funeral rites in sorrow, streaming tears.
> Once we'd burned the dead man and the dead man's armor,
> heaping his grave-mound, hauling a stone that coped it well,
> we planted his balanced oar aloft to crown his tomb.[40]

A comparison of this tale with that of Luke's Eutychus reveals several similarities. The introductions of the two youths are quite similar: "There was a man, Elpenor, the youngest"; "A certain young man named Eutychus was seated at the window."[41] Both narrators shift the voice from the first person (I/we) to the third; both call the victim of the fall a youth (νεώτατος/νεανίας); both name him; and both contain the words δέ τις ("and a certain") in the second and third positions.

Homer states that Odysseus's crew gave way to "sweet sleep"; Luke's Eutychus was overcome by "deep sleep." Elpenor died when he woke up, Eutychus when he dozed off; both fell to their deaths. "He fell down from the roof"; "He fell down from the third story."[42] Both of these sentences contain πέσεν or ἔπεσεν (third-person singular aorist of πίπτω, "fall"), a form of κατά (καταντικρύ and κάτω, "down"), and some variation of the word τέγος, "roof," in the genitive case (τέγεος and τριστέγου).[43]

Twice Homer says that the soul of Elpenor rushed off to Hades. On seeing him there, Odysseus sobbed, "I wept, and my heart had compassion on him."[44] Believers in Troas, on the other hand, did not need to lament, for unlike Elpenor's soul, immediately and forever banished to Hades, Eutychus's soul stayed in him.

In the netherworld Elpenor's soul asked Odysseus to return to Circe's island to mourn and bury his corpse, and the king of Ithaca did so the following day, at dawn. Both here and in Acts 20, the resolution of the victim's plight did not occur until dawn. Odysseus could only mourn and bury his dead comrade, whereas Paul's God raised the fallen youth back to life. Odysseus himself did not fetch Elpenor's corpse; his comrades did, "in sorrow, streaming tears."[45] Similarly, Paul

did not revive Eutychus's corpse; others "brought the lad, living" and "were not a little relieved."[46]

There can be little doubt that an educated Greek author like Luke had access (criterion one) to the story of Elpenor. Because of his strategic location immediately prior to, at the beginning of, and immediately following one of Homer's most memorable and controversial episodes, Elpenor became an ancient household word, even in Christian households. Clement of Alexandria cited the example of Elpenor's fall to discourage drunkenness and assumed that his readers would recognize the allusion: "just as Elpenor 'broke his neck' when he fell down because he was drunk."[47]

Luke's story also satisfies the second criterion, analogy, insofar as many ancient authors, including some of Luke's contemporaries, modeled characters after Elpenor. Vergil was particularly fond of him and created two characters after him in the *Aeneid:* Palinurus and Misenus.[48] Elpenor's literary legacy underwent its most important transformation at the hands of Plato, who in turn was to have imitators of his own. At the end of the *Republic,* Socrates provided his own interpretation of the netherworld to replace Homer's version of life after death with one that not only punished the wicked but also rewarded the righteous. "It is not, let me tell you," says Plato's Socrates, "the tale to Alcinous told [by Odysseus] that I shall unfold, but the tale of a warrior bold [ἀλκίμου], Er, the son of Armenius."[49] The use of the Homeric adjective ἄλκιμος here contrasts with Homer's description of Elpenor: "not over valiant [ἄλκιμος] in war."

> He once upon a time was slain in battle, and when the corpses were taken up on the tenth day already decayed, was found intact, and having been brought home, at the moment of his funeral, on the twelfth day, as he lay upon the pyre, revived, and after coming to life related what, he said, he had seen in the world beyond. He said that when his soul went forth from his body he journeyed with a great company and that they came to a mysterious region.[50]

Er then articulates a mythical account of reincarnation suitable to Plato's Socrates. "[H]ow and in what way he returned to the body he said he did not know, but suddenly recovering his sight he saw himself at dawn lying on the funeral pyre."[51] Plato's Socrates thus recast the tragedy of Elpenor into the revival of Er, who gave a more satisfactory account of the afterlife than Homer's. Er himself was a metaphor for Platonic reincarnation.

Plutarch, Luke's contemporary, wrote of a young man named Thespesius who had squandered his youth until he saw the punishments of the wicked in Hades for himself. "He had fallen from a height, struck his neck and . . . died." He revived on the day of his burial and told what he had seen in the netherworld, borrowing motifs both from Homer's nekyia and Plato's myth of Er.[52]

Writing about 170–180 C.E., Apuleius told a story about a young thief named Alcimus ("Valiant"), the very quality—the very word!—that Homer denied to Elpenor. Like Elpenor, Alcimus was foolish, died from a fall at night, and did not receive a proper burial. He thus was unlucky, like "unlucky" Elpenor. Apuleius almost certainly expected the cleverest of his readers to see here a twist on the story of not-so-alcimus Elpenor. The claim that Luke imitated Homer's story of Elpenor places him within a thriving tradition of ancient mimesis. Luke's Eutychus had literary siblings.[53]

The following should leave little doubt that the parallels between the two stories satisfy the criteria of density and order; they are more lexical, more detailed, and more sequential than the rewritings of the Elpenor story by Plato, Plutarch, Vergil, or Apuleius.

| *Odyssey* 10–12 | Acts 20:7–12 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus and crew left Troy | Paul and crew stopped at Troas having |
| and sailed back to Achaea. | left Achaea to sail back to Jerusalem. |
| Narration in first-person plural | Narration in first-person plural |
| After a sojourn, the crew and Odysseus | After a sojourn, the believers and Paul |
| ate a meal. | ate a meal. |
| Disaster came at night. | Disaster came at midnight. |
| The crew slept in Circe's "darkened halls." | "There were plenty of lamps in the upper room." |
| Elpenor fell into "sweet sleep." | Eutychus fell into a "deep sleep." |
| The narrator switches to third person: | The narrator switches to third person: |
| "There was one, Elpenor, the youngest." | "A certain young man named Eutychus." |
| Elpenor fell from the roof. | Eutychus fell from the third story. |
| Elpenor's soul went to Hades. | Eutychus's soul remained in him. |
| Associates fetched the body, dead. | Associates took up the body, alive. |
| Elpenor was not buried until dawn. | Eutychus was not raised alive until dawn. |

These parallels also satisfy criterion five: Luke retains distinctive features of Homer's story. For example, Homer and Luke shift from first-person-plural narration to the third person at precisely the same point in the story, when they introduce the young men. Both stories concern the status of the boys' souls after death, and both mention the fetching of their corpses at dawn. The very mention of a youth falling from height to his death might be sufficient reason to relate the two stories, but Luke provided two even clearer markers of his hypertextuality.

Luke placed the story in Troas, situated in the Troad a mere ten miles south of ancient Troy. Like many ancient cities, Sigeum was renamed Alexandria in honor of Alexander the Great, and to distinguish it from its namesakes was known as

Alexandria in the Troad.[54] Long before Luke's time it had become simply Troas and continued to enjoy its Trojan fame. According to Suetonius, rumor had it that, because of Rome's mythological affinity with Troy via Aeneas, Julius Caesar considered moving the capital from Rome to "Alexandreia [Troas] or Ilium."[55] Suetonius explicitly identified Troas with the legacies of Troy. By placing the story of Eutychus in Troy, Luke seems to be hinting that one should read it in light of Troy's mythological traditions.[56]

The most important hypertextual clue, however, is the name Eutychus. Homer repeatedly emphasized Elpenor's bad fortune. The young soldier survived the Trojan War, Laestrygonian cannibals, and Polyphemus only to step off Circe's roof to his doom. Elpenor himself stated that he was the victim of "an evil fate" and called himself an "unlucky man." Odysseus too addressed him as "unlucky."[57] Eutychus, on the other hand, means "lucky" (ευ-τυχ-). Significant names were common in Greek literature, as early as Homer himself.[58] When Apuleius wished to call attention to his rewriting of the Elpenor story, he did so by naming his character Alcimus ("Valiant") and declaring from the outset his bad luck: he "could not attract the approving nod of Fortune." Considering the other similarities between the two stories, the selection of the name Eutychus hardly seems accidental; it is distinctive. Despite Luke's hypertextual flags, no reader for nearly two thousand years seems to have recognized them.

The sixth and final criterion is interpretability, that is, the presence of transvaluation or emulation. Not only are the two stories remarkably similar, they are strategically dissimilar. At dawn at Circe's island, Odysseus was unable to raise back to life unlucky Elpenor. Paul, however, was able, through the power of his God, to raise "Lucky" on the Troad. Plato had emulated Elpenor in Er, a warrior who returned from the dead to narrate a tour of the netherworld unlike Odysseus's. The reviving of Er *eo ipso* symbolized reincarnation. Luke similarly transvalued Elpenor in Eutychus, whose reviving symbolized resurrection.

This digression from Mark to Acts accomplishes two related objectives. First, it illustrates the method to be used throughout this book, including the six criteria for mimesis. Second, it sets the stage for the identification of the two young men at the end of Mark: the youth who fled naked at Jesus' arrest and the youth in the tomb Easter morning. They are a single character who emulates Homer's Elpenor. This discussion, however, must wait.[59]

# 2

## *Carpenters Who Suffer Many Things*

The earliest evangelist told his readers that after Jesus disputed with Jewish authorities in the temple, "one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' "[1] Many scholars have interpreted this statement as an actual prophecy of the temple's destruction in the summer of 70 C.E.—if not a prophecy of Jesus himself, at least of Mark, who, writing toward the end of the war, considered a Roman victory inevitable. But Jesus' clairvoyant answer to the question of the disciples—"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?"—suggests rather that Mark wrote in the war's immediate aftermath.

Like many of his contemporaries, Mark interpreted the destruction of the temple as God's judgment on Judaism, especially Jewish leaders, for the execution of Jesus. But the Jewish authorities were not the only victims of the war; indeed, the Jerusalem church, too, was destroyed.[2] Even though those who had killed Jesus deserved their Roman comeuppance, in Mark's view, what about suffering by the innocent? Mark's solution was twofold: to emphasize Jesus' own sufferings and, as we shall see in chapter 21, to absolve him from the charge that he had failed to warn his followers of the coming destruction.

Mark's Jesus was not a national messiah who would inaugurate a kingdom by

divine power; he was the crucified one who endured suffering and expected the same of his followers. Indeed, it was precisely because he suffered that he would be victorious and return as the Son of Man to punish his foes. Paul had advocated a similar christology, but he did not write a gospel. Mark did and thus needed literary models for his suffering protagonist. He found partial inspiration in the Septuagint. The passion narrative, for example, bulges with possible allusions to psalms of lamentation and poems of suffering servants. But Mark's primary inspiration for his narrative, I suggest, was Homer's presentation of Odysseus as "much-enduring" and as "a man of many sorrows," "ill-fated above all men."[3]

Homer established suffering as a dominant theme of the epic in the opening lines: "many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades." Furthermore, the *Odyssey* is rife with predictions of sufferings that employ some form of the verb πάσχειν, "to suffer."[4] Homer applied these expressions to Odysseus throughout the epic, as in the opening lines just cited, where the verb πάσχειν appears with πολλὰ ἄλγεα, "many hardships." The same phrase appears elsewhere as well. Homer accomplished the same effect simply by combining πολλά and πάσχειν, "to suffer many things."[5]

Mark used a similar expression when speaking of Jesus' sufferings in the first of the so-called passion predictions: "[T]he Son of Man must suffer many things (πολλὰ παθεῖν)."[6] The mere conjunction of two words establishes no genetic connection, insofar as such an expression might have been commonplace. But the phrase never appears in the Septuagint, never appears in Philo, and appears only three times in all of Josephus. One finds the phrase in the New Testament only in Matthew and Luke, and in only one instance is the phrase not lifted directly from Mark.[7] Πολλὰ πάσχειν was not standard Jewish or Christian fare.

Odysseus's sufferings were all the more tragic in light of his nobility. Though a mortal, Odysseus receives more divine epithets than any hero in Homeric epic, whether in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, including the epithet διογένης, "born of Zeus," applied to Odysseus eight times in the *Iliad*, twenty-two times in the *Odyssey*, and only fourteen times to all other Homeric heroes combined. In the epics, this epithet refers not to Zeus as the hero's immediate sire but as his ancestor. Several times Homer indicates that Odysseus was like a god.[8] When Homer likened heroes to gods, he had in mind physical beauty, not moral or spiritual qualities or divine parentage; even so, Homer's Hellenistic readers sometimes viewed Odysseus, as they did other heroes, as superhuman.[9]

Many ancients also considered him the epitome of the moral life. To Cynics he was an exemplar of the self-sufficient individual, inured to privation and pain, a king in rags, willing to sacrifice his own comfort for the common good, preferring "wise Penelope" to the beautiful and immortal Calypso.[10] Stoics saw in his intel-

ligence, courage, adaptability, and endurance reason to elevate him to the model σοφός and the *Odyssey* to "a kind of Stoic *Pilgrim's Progress.*"[11] Seneca wrote, "[W]e Stoics have declared that these [Odysseus and Heracles] were wise men, because they were unconquered by struggles, were despisers of pleasure, and victors over all terror."[12] To rhetoricians Odysseus was the eloquent wandering philosopher, "the wisest and best of the Greeks."[13] Christians later would compare Jesus' crucifixion to Odysseus's being lashed to the mast of his ship as he sailed past the Sirens. The *Acts of Andrew* similarly depicted Andrew as a christianized Odysseus, lashed to his cross at the edge of the sea while he preached against pleasures and encouraged the crowd to join him in his journey to his true home, heaven. Other comparisons between Andrew and Odysseus appear throughout the *Acts.*[14]

The sufferings of Mark's Jesus were similar to those of Homer's Odysseus. Both faced supernatural opposition: Odysseus from Calypso, Circe, Poseidon, and Polyphemus; Jesus from demons and a wild demoniac. Each traveled with companions unable to endure the hardships of the journey, and each returned to a home infested with rivals who would attempt to kill him as soon as they recognized him. Both heroes returned from Hades alive. But Jesus' suffering was even more extreme than Odysseus's. When Homer's hero returned to Ithaca he slew his opponents; when Jesus returned to Judea his opponents slew *him.*[15]

For Jesus' crucifixion and burial, Mark abandoned the *Odyssey* and borrowed instead from Books 22 and 24 of the *Iliad:* the death and burial of Hector, another of Homer's suffering heroes. Whereas Hector died and his soul descended permanently to Hades, Jesus arose on the third day, and the reader knows that someday he will return to punish his enemies and reward the faithful. Mark used Odyssean imagery to express this hope. "It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come."[16]

Among Jesus' sufferings was his rejection when he returned "to his fatherland," where the local residents knew him as "the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon." But when they heard him teaching in their synagogue, they were astounded and asked themselves: "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom that has been given him and such deeds of power accomplished by his hands?"[17] Mark's readers know how to answer these questions: Jesus has this wisdom and power because he was not merely a carpenter; he was the Son of God. Jesus did not say this to his countrymen directly; rather, he claimed only to be a prophet: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his fatherland, among his own relatives and in his own house."[18]

Several aspects of this passage parallel Homer's depiction of Odysseus, whom

the distant Phaeacians "honored as if he were a god," but when he returned home, he suffered abuse, humiliation, and dishonor.[19] Thirty-four times when Homer spoke of Odysseus's return, he employed the formula ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, "to his fatherland," which is similar to Mark's introduction of this pericope: Jesus returned "to his fatherland [εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ]." Furthermore, when Homer described Odysseus's abuse at home, he often used the same root that Mark used of Jesus: α-τιμ-. The king of Ithaca was dishonored by the suitors, his relatives, and others in his own home.[20] One might well say of Odysseus what Mark said of Jesus: he was "not without honor, except in his fatherland, among his own kin, and in his own house."

Scholars routinely treat Mark's identification of Jesus as a carpenter as historically reliable because there is no apparent reason for the evangelist to have concocted this information, especially because it could have been embarrassing, as illustrated by alterations in the other gospels and the squeamishness of later tradition.[21]

Jesus may indeed have been a carpenter, but Odysseus, too, was a τέκτων; he had invented the Trojan horse and built his own palace. Homer went to great lengths to illustrate Odysseus's skill with his hands in order to symbolize his intelligence, foresight, and clever resourcefulness. One first learns of Odysseus's carpentry when he builds a ship chez Calypso.

> She gave him a heavy bronze ax that fit his grip,
> both blades well-honed, with a fine olive haft
> lashed firm to its head. She gave him a polished
> smoothing-adze as well and then she led the way
> to the island's outer edge where trees grew tall,
> alders, black poplars and firs that shot sky-high,
> seasoned, drying for years, ideal for easy floating.
> Once she'd shown her guest where the tall timber stood,
> Calypso the lustrous goddess headed home again.
> He set to cutting trunks—the work was done in no time.
> Twenty in all he felled, he trimmed them clean with his ax
> and split them deftly, trued them straight to the line.
> Meanwhile the radiant goddess brought him drills—
> he bored through all his planks and wedged them snugly,
> knocking them home together, locked with pegs and bolts.
> Broad in the beam and bottom flat as a merchantman
> when a master carpenter [τεκτοσυνάων] turns out her hull,
> so broad the craft Odysseus made himself.
> Working away at speed
> he put up half-decks pinned to close-set ribs
> and a sweep of gunwales rounded off the sides.

> He fashioned a mast next and sank its yard in deep
> and added a steering-oar to hold her right on course,
> then he fenced her stem to stern with twigs and wicker,
> bulwark against the sea-surge, floored with heaps of brush.[22]

At the end of the epic, too, the poet emphasized Odysseus's masterful carpentry. He had given care to every detail of his magnificent estate, down to individual posts: "He sat down upon the ashwood threshold within the doorway, leaning upon the doorpost of cypress, which of old a carpenter [τέκτων (Odysseus himself)] had skillfully planed, and trued it to the line."[23] The recognition scene with Penelope trades on his carpentry insofar as he demonstrates his identity by describing his elaborately crafted bed, which no other man had even seen, and which he made himself.[24]

For Homer, Odysseus's handiwork reinforced his intelligence, resourcefulness, and wit; carpentry was a metaphor for wisdom.[25] The opposite is the case in Mark, and the earliest evangelist may be emulating Homer's hero, making Jesus even wiser and more powerful than Odysseus. Jesus' neighbors recognized him as a carpenter, but his wisdom and ability to perform miracles far exceeded what they expected even from a skilled craftsman.

Despite these differences, Mark, like Homer, depicted his protagonist as a wise and powerful carpenter who had less honor in his homeland than anywhere else. Once the evangelist linked the sufferings of Jesus to those of Odysseus, he found in the epic a reservoir of landscapes, characterizations, type-scenes, and plot devices useful for crafting his narrative.

# 3

## *Foolish Companions*

More than any other gospel, Mark depicts Jesus' disciples as fearful, unfaithful, and uncomprehending. Even though Jesus had told them explicitly about the "mystery" of God's rule, they repeatedly demonstrated their failure to understand. Four of them had been fishermen, but when tossed about by a storm at sea, they were helpless. Jesus had to force the Twelve to sail without him, and they mistook him walking on the waves for a phantom, quickly forgot that he could multiply loaves and fish, could not understand that he must suffer and die, argued with each other concerning who was the greatest, vied for privileged places in the afterlife, and squabbled like petulant children. One of the Twelve betrayed Jesus to the authorities; at his arrest, just when he needed them most, the eleven others fled in fear. Peter, his second-in-command, three times denied knowing him, and all proved to be greedy, cowardly, potentially treacherous, and above all foolish, unable to understand and respond as they ought. Such harsh treatment of the disciples surely is a Marcan creation, and Matthew and Luke repeatedly deleted disparaging passages or adjusted them to improve apostolic reputations.[1]

Scholars have proposed several targets for Mark's putative hostility to the Twelve: members of the Jerusalem church as adherents of an antiquated theology, those who emphasized Jesus' miracle working at the expense of the cross, or the apostles themselves as transmitters of unacceptable tradition. But Mark's depic-

tion of the disciples is not consistently pejorative. They had left everything to follow Jesus; they had received the secret of the kingdom of God; they exercised authority over demons and healed the sick; one of them recognized Jesus to be the Messiah; three of them saw Jesus transfigured in glory; four of them heard his predictions of future events; and eleven of them were supposed to meet the risen Lord in Galilee. Mark 13:9–13 implies that after the resurrection, the disciples proclaimed the gospel widely and were persecuted for it. Had Mark wanted to demolish apostolic reputations, he could have done so more thoroughly.

Other interpreters have attributed Mark's complex depiction to memory of the virtues and vices of the historical Twelve, while others have sought to ascribe it to a discrepancy between pre-Marcan tradition and Marcan redaction, attributing the positive depictions to tradition and the negative to Mark's redaction. As promising as this approach at first might seem, its execution has proved highly subjective. Several literary critics, insisting on interpreting the text as we have it without appeal to the isolation of pre-Marcan tradition, have suggested that the evangelist wished his reader to identify with the humanity of the Twelve, with their potential for good and evil. In this way, Mark challenged his reader to decide what kind of disciple he or she should be.[2]

The debate over Mark's disciples continues and may not soon subside, but a comparison of the Gospel with the *Odyssey* suggests an elegant solution. Homer highlighted Odysseus's endurance, courage, and wisdom by contrasting him with other characters, especially the comrades who sailed with him from Troy in Books 9–12, Odysseus's *nostos*. The poet lost no time in establishing the foolishness of Odysseus's crew as a major theme of the epic:

> [M]any pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
> fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.
> But he could not save them from disaster, hard as he strove—
> the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all,
> the blind fools.[3]

Although these men were hardened veterans of the Trojan War, the enormous difficulties they faced during their nostos produced terror and frequent weeping.[4] Many of their woes, however, they brought on themselves through their notorious stupidity, which increases in intensity and gravity and pertains above all to their bellies. One classicist described Odysseus's comrades as "stupid, crude, silly men, many certainly inferiors, shivering with fear, getting into trouble."[5] This statement equally well describes the disciples in Mark. Later chapters investigate episodes in which the disciples play roles similar to those Homer gave to Odysseus's crew.

Four additional characteristics of Mark's disciples resemble those of Odysseus's

crew. Both in Odysseus's nostos and Mark's Gospel, the narrator first presents the hero's retinue favorably and gradually introduces evidence of their folly until, in the end, they fail altogether. Second, Homer and Mark both treat the hero's retinue as a unified group. Few individuals in either assemblage have distinguishing traits, and each group as a whole derives its identity almost exclusively vis-à-vis the protagonist. Third, both retinues failed, because they, unlike the hero himself, could not endure hardships. Fourth, Mark's Simon Peter plays a role reminiscent of Eurylochus, Odysseus's second-in-command.

When one first meets Eurylochus, his epithets suggest that he was nearly Odysseus's peer as a hero—"godlike" and "great-hearted"—but one's impression of Eurylochus steadily deteriorates.[6] In contrast to Odysseus, Eurylochus does his best to avoid danger and suffering. "Eurylochus . . . is set up by the narrator to represent the craven attitude toward life."[7] No other character speaks on behalf of the entire crew; it is he who opposes Odysseus on behalf of the others, who, like himself, are incapable of enduring hardships. For example, as their ship sailed past the island of Thrinacia, Eurylochus complained to Odysseus that he and the rest of the crew could not continue their voyage until they had a hot meal and a good night's sleep on terra firma. At dawn, fed and rested, they would shove off.[8] Against his better judgment, Odysseus consented but made them swear never to slay the cattle sacred to the Sun that grazed on the island. This delay was their undoing. Zeus sent them unnavigable weather, postponing their departure for a month, so long that they exhausted the supplies Circe had given them. When "hunger pinched their bellies," Eurylochus convinced the rest that there was no death worse than starving on an island swarming with roastable livestock. While Odysseus slept, they slew a few of the cattle. To punish their hubris, Zeus later drowned them all at sea, forcing Odysseus to complete his voyage and face his rivals at home without their help.

Similarly in Mark, the reader first views Peter favorably: he had left everything to fish for humans, and he was the first character, apart from the demons, to recognize Jesus' true identity. He spoke not merely for himself but for the Twelve as a whole.[9] But one's assessment of Peter changes dramatically in a series of disputes over suffering. For example, Jesus ordered the disciples not to publicize Peter's recognition of him and then, for the first time, warned them that he must "suffer many things" at the hands of "the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."[10] Peter greeted this statement with a complaint similar to Eurylochus's on hearing that the ship would not stop at Thrinacia.[11] Both runners-up challenged the authority of the protagonists, objecting to their severity and doomsday predictions. Eurylochus rebuked Odysseus for not taking pity on his hungry crew, who could not tolerate such suffering: "So spoke Eurylochus, and the rest of my comrades gave assent. Then it was that I

realized that some god [δαίμων] was assuredly devising ill."[12] Peter could not understand a messiah who must suffer and die. "But turning and looking at his disciples, he [Jesus] rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' "[13]

If Mark had in mind Eurylochus's complaint, he might have taken δαίμων here to refer not to a god, as in Homeric Greek, but to a demon who had prompted Eurylochus and others to seek short-term comforts. A demon had beguiled Eurylochus; Satan seduced Simon. Eurylochus could not accept Odysseus's tolerance for hunger; Peter could not accept Jesus' suffering.

After the Last Supper, Jesus predicted that everyone would forsake him. Peter swore that he would never abandon his Lord: " 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And all of them said the same."[14] The next episode, however, demonstrates the weakness of their resolve: they were unable to stay awake while Jesus agonized in prayer. All the disciples fled at Jesus' arrest, and Peter, when later confronted by a maidservant and bystanders, denied knowing him. It would not be Simon Peter to bear the cross but another Simon—Simon of Cyrene. Like Eurylochus and the rest of Odysseus's crew, Peter and the rest of the disciples broke their vows to the hero in the face of suffering. Jesus, like Odysseus, had to confront his opponents alone.

Homer obviously harbored no hostility for Eurylochus or any of Odysseus's crew; they were, after all, fictions. He depicted them negatively merely to enhance by comparison the wisdom, courage, and self-control of Odysseus. Similarly, in Mark, after Jesus himself, the next most admirable characters are the disciples. When the earliest evangelist portrays them negatively, he does so to contrast their vices with the virtues of their Lord, especially his capacity for suffering. Although the Twelve may be ciphers for an objectionable theology, they surely are foils for a heroic christology that exalts the suffering protagonist at the expense of his inept associates.

# 4

## *Sons of Thunder*

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, join Simon (and sometimes Andrew) to witness Jesus' most private and spectacular moments: his healing Simon's mother-in-law, his raising to life of Jairus's daughter, his Transfiguration, his predictions of the future on the Mount of Olives, and his agony at Gethsemane. The earliest evangelist renamed only three of the disciples: to Simon, Jesus gave the name Peter, and to James and John the collective name Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder. Mark consistently presented these brothers as veritable twins with no distinguishing traits. He referred to James nine times, always as the first of the brothers: "James and John."[1] John once appears without James (9:38), but even here he has no characteristic to distinguish him from his brother. Like Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee, whatever the brothers do, they do together.

No other evangelist gave them such prominence. Matthew repeatedly deleted Mark's references to them; he added only that their mother was one of the women at the empty tomb.[2] Luke, too, often dropped the brothers in his borrowing from Mark, but he did add an important tale about them that will concern us later.[3] Despite its title, the Gospel of John never refers to John—or James—though the epilogue does include "the sons of Zebedee" among the disciples who went to Galilee to fish after the resurrection. Only Mark says that Jesus renamed them Boanerges.

The earliest gospel first mentions them in the following passage. "As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him."[4] The sons of Zebedee left their father in the boat to become anglers for *anthropoi,* but they frequently sail the Sea of Galilee in chapters 3 to 8.[5]

It is in Mark 3:17 that one finds the sons of Zebedee renamed "Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder." From information supplied thus far in the narrative, the reader might reasonably compare them to Castor and Polydeuces (Latin, Pollux). In 1913 J. Rendel Harris published an extensive study entitled *Boanerges* in which he suggested that the sons of Zebedee were christianized Heavenly Twins, avatars of the Dioscuri.[6] The key to this identification is "Boanerges," which the evangelist translated into Greek as Sons of Thunder (υἱοὶ βροντῆς) "and in that one stroke swept them out of whatever historic reality they might have had and into the procedures of mythic transformation."[7] Greeks knew Castor and Polydeuces as sons of Leda by her husband Tyndareus, but also as the Dioscuri, "Zeus's boys." Among Zeus's epithets were "the Thunderer" and "the Thundering One." His father Cronos bore the epithet "Father-of-thunder-and-lightning." As early as Homer, thunder and lightning were taken as signs of Zeus. Both sets of brothers thus were given collective names that identified them as sons of someone other than their biological father, and in both cases the father was related to thunder.

According to Harris, the origins of Dioscurism lay in prehistoric astrology and superstitions concerning twins. He argued for the ubiquity of the myth not only in ancient Greece and Rome but also in Egypt, India, Palestine, central Asia Minor, Syria, Australia, North and South America, Southeast Asia, and various regions of Africa. Evidence of this myth among Christians includes the depiction of Judas Didymus Thomas as Jesus' twin in the *Acts of Thomas;* twinned saints of medieval Europe; and the cult of Santiago (from *Sanctus Iacobus*), which held James to be brother not of John but of Jesus. Jesus' naming the sons of Zebedee Sons of Thunder, argued Harris, is Mark's window to a landscape of early Christian Dioscurism.

Harris did not investigate the implications of his own research for the window per se. That is, he did not notice that the name Boanerges alerted Mark's reader to the similarities between these brothers and Castor and Polydeuces. Mark consistently presented the brothers as christianized Dioscuri and expected his readers to interpret them as such.

The *Homeric Hymns* that were dedicated to the Dioscuri (probably seventh or sixth century B.C.E.) established the pattern.

> Bright-eyed Muses, tell of the Tyndaridae, the Sons of Zeus, glorious children of neat-ankled Leda, Castor the tamer of horses, and blameless Polydeuces. When Leda had lain with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos, she bare them beneath the peak of the great hill Taÿgetus, — children who are deliverers of men on earth and of swift-going ships when stormy gales rage over the ruthless sea. Then the shipmen call upon the sons of great Zeus with vows of white lambs, going to the peak of the stern; but the strong wind and the waves of the sea lay the ship under water, until suddenly these two are seen darting through the air on tawny wings. Forthwith they allay the blasts of the cruel winds and still the waves upon the surface of the white sea: fair signs are they and deliverance from toil. And when the shipmen see them they are glad and have rest from their pain and labour.[8]

Ancient sailors interpreted St. Elmo's fire (electrically generated sparks that light up the masts of ships before a storm) as epiphanies of the Dioscuri. How fortunate for Jason that his Argonauts included Castor and Polydeuces, who prayed to their thundering sire for safety at sea![9]

James and John, too, were sailors; they fished from their father's boat. Both sets of brothers had collective names related to two different fathers: James and John were the sons of Zebedee as well as the Boanerges, Sons of Thunder; Castor and Polydeuces (usually mentioned in this order) were the sons of Tyndareus as well as the Dioscuri, or Boys of Zeus. Later pericopes in Mark parody the Dioscuri in their Boanerges disguise.

Mark's next explicit reference to the brothers is Jesus' selection of them, along with Peter, to witness his revival of Jairus's daughter. The earliest evangelist does not mention them again until the Transfiguration. "Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus."[10] The presence of James and John at the Transfiguration helps explain their unusual request in 10:35–40, the next time Mark refers to the brothers, and the only time he does so independent of Simon Peter.

Here, once again, the brothers are indistinguishable; they even speak in unison: "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' "[11] The brothers had seen Jesus glorified at the Transfiguration and now wanted such glory for themselves. Curiously, they seemed not to care which of them sat on the right and left, though

the right hand was the seat of greater glory.[12] Their request suggests they were not competing with each other, just with the other disciples—at least this is how the other ten took it.

In the art of the Roman Imperial period, the Dioscuri commonly appeared on the right and left of an enthroned deity. A star above the head of each brother symbolized his heavenly glorification. Almost always the brothers mirrored each other, without distinguishing traits, making it impossible to know which one is which. A Greek coin shows them on either side of Serapis, and the same scene is shown on a Greek gem. Other gems place the brothers to the right and left of Zeus. Roman art also placed these Castores on the right and left side of Serapis, the Mithraic Aeon, Saturn, Mars, Juno, and Jupiter.[13] Mark's readers might naturally have seen in the request of the Sons of Thunder a request for glorification like that of the Sons of Zeus.

Jesus responded, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"[14] The symbols of the cup and baptism probably signify suffering with Jesus. The brothers answered, "We are able." The reader soon will learn that despite their statement and, later, their alignment with Peter's willingness to die with Jesus, they would not be able to follow him to his death.[15] They, like the rest of the disciples, would flee at his arrest.

Simon Peter would not be able "to carry his cross" as Jesus had commanded in 8:34 and as Peter had promised in 14:31; instead, it would be his namesake, Simon of Cyrene. Similarly, James and John would not be able to drink Jesus' cup or be baptized with his baptism, that is, to die with him. Instead, two thieves would be crucified with him, "one on his right and one on his left." Mark sharpened the tragedy by having these three disciples accompany Jesus at the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, the prophecies on the Mount of Olives, and the agony at Gethsemane. They should have accompanied Jesus to his death as well.

The continuation of Jesus' response to the Sons of Thunder, with its subtle change of tense, indicates that even though the brothers were unable to follow Jesus to his cross, someday they would suffer for him. "The cup that I drink you *will* drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you *will* be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those from whom it has been prepared."[16] On the surface this passage seems to predict the martyrdoms of the sons of Zebedee and has prompted scholars to argue that both brothers had indeed died as martyrs prior to the composition of the earliest gospel.[17] According to Acts 12:2, Herod Antipas "executed James the brother of John with a sword," but neither Acts nor any other text of the New Testament mentions a martyrdom of John. Furthermore, Jesus' prediction that James and

John would both drink Jesus' cup and be baptized with his baptism never generated apocryphal traditions concerning his martyrdom.[18] Indeed, the *Acts of John* claimed that that apostle died at a ripe old age and never suffered martyrdom. The epilogue to the Gospel of John sought to correct a tradition that John would not die. The author apparently thought that some might view the recent death of the disciple as a disconfirmation of Jesus' promise that John would survive to the parousia.[19] The dominant ecclesiastical tradition held that John took up residence at Ephesus and, the oldest of the original disciples, died by natural causes or martyrdom.

Mark may have shared the notion that this disciple would not die before the return of Jesus. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus had told the Twelve, "There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."[20] Many interpreters have taken this to refer to Jesus' glorification on the Mount of Transfiguration that immediately follows, but for Mark the Transfiguration of Jesus would hardly qualify as the coming of the kingdom of God. One probably should read this prediction with the preceding verse, which predicts the coming of the Son of Man, and with another prediction in 13:30 that "this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place"; indeed, the two verses are remarkably similar in wording.[21] Mark 13:30 obviously does not refer to the Transfiguration but to the parousia. It would seem reasonable to assume that "this generation" would include one or more of the disciples, who would "not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

In his predictions to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Jesus warned that they will "be beaten in synagogues, and . . . will stand before governors and kings." They "will be hated by all," but "the one who endures to the end will be saved."[22] This last phrase is notoriously obscure. Most commentators take it to mean that anyone who endures the anticipated persecution perfectly or until their death will be rewarded with life everlasting, but εἰς τέλος can also be taken to mean "to the end" of the war.[23] In other words, if someone survives faithfully to the end of the persecution Jesus predicted, he or she will escape death. Like Mark, written after the fall of Jerusalem, 4 Ezra contains a similar promise: "And it shall be that whoever remains after all [the catastrophes] I have told you, will be saved and will see my salvation and the end of my world."[24] If one reads Mark the same way, Jesus' prediction that "the one who endures to the end will be saved" refers to a believer who survives the war. John surely is the best candidate for the one among the Twelve who would not taste death before seeing the arrival of the kingdom of God, who would be a representative of the generation that would not pass away before the coming of the Son of Man.

If Mark thought John would not die, what did he mean by Jesus' prediction that James and John would drink Jesus' cup and be baptized with his baptism?

Some scholars have read this prediction as a reference merely to the Eucharist and baptism. I prefer the interpretation of John Chrysostom, who thought Jesus' cup and baptism referred to death, even though John did not actually die as a martyr, "for James was beheaded by a sword [Acts 12:2], and John died many times [πολλάκις ἀπέθανε]."[25] Obviously John was not martyred many times, but traditionally he did often suffer. The evidence cited here suggests—though it cannot prove—that when Mark wrote, the two sons of Zebedee had radically different life spans: James was the first of the Twelve to die, but his brother was thought never to die. In this respect, too, the Boanerges parallel the Dioscuri.

Tyndareus had sired Castor, but Zeus had sired Polydeuces.[26] Castor thus was mortal and Polydeuces immortal, and in a fight Castor died. So profoundly did Polydeuces love his brother that he asked Zeus to slay him; he had no desire to live without his brother. Zeus then offered Polydeuces the chance to share a single immortality with Castor. According to Pindar, "In alternate changes the twin brethren spend the one day beside their dear father Zeus and, the other, down in the hollow earth."[27] More popular was the notion that on alternate days one brother was alive while the other was dead.[28]

The martyrdom of James corresponds to the death of Castor; the longevity of John is similar to the immortality of Polydeuces. The typical order of the naming of the brothers places the slain brother's name first—Castor and Polydeuces, James and John—even though the second brother is the more exalted of the two.[29]

The Boanerges, like the Dioscuri, wanted to make a special arrangement for the hereafter. They did not ask to share a single immortality but equal glory, seated on either side of Jesus. Their brotherly love may explain why they seem not to have cared who sat on the more prestigious right hand. Zeus granted the request of Polydeuces, but Jesus rejected the request of James and John. They were asking for honors not his to grant. Mark did not merely mimic the Dioscuri, he transvalued or emulated them. Jesus refused the request of the Sons of Thunder for eternal honors, insisting instead on the importance of suffering.

The following columns show the similarities between the two sets of brothers.

| *Castor and Polydeuces* | *James and John* |
|---|---|
| Sons of Tyndareus | Sons of Zebedee |
| Also known as Dioscuri, lads of Zeus | Also known as Boanerges, Sons of Thunder |
| Argonauts | Fishermen |
| Castor died a violent death. | James died a violent death. |
| Polydeuces could have lived forever. | John was thought to live until the parousia. |
| Polydeuces asked Zeus if he and Castor could share a single immortality. | The brothers asked to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in his glory. |
| Zeus consented. | Jesus refused. |

The author of the Gospel of Luke may have recognized James and John as avatars of the Heavenly Twins, even though he deleted Mark's reference to them as Sons of Thunder and their request for seats at the right and left of the enthroned Jesus. Luke obviously knew of traditions about the Dioscuri, not simply because he was an educated Greek but because in Acts 28 he wrote that Paul's ship from Malta to Puteoli bore the sign of the Dioscuri. Nowhere else does Luke mention the insignia of ships; by referring to the Dioscuri here he seems to anticipate Paul's safe journey as though under the protection of the Twins.

The following passage is the only contribution of Luke's Gospel to traditions concerning the sons of Zebedee, and it conforms to yet another aspect of the myth of the Dioscuri. "When the days drew near for him [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them."[30] A textual variant adds to the question of James and John, "as Elijah did." Indeed, the reference to fire from heaven is nearly identical to the Septuagint of 2 Kings 1:10 and 12, where Elijah calls down heavenly fire to consume soldiers sent by King Ahaziah. Surely it is plausible to regard this passage as an adaptation of this episode of Elijah, just as the scribe responsible for the variant did. But Luke's indebtedness to 2 Kings does not explain why he chose James and John. Why not Peter or any of the other disciples? Why the sons of Zebedee?

Luke's "fire from heaven" obviously is lightning, an appropriate weapon for the Sons of Thunder. Jesus seems to have supposed that they actually possessed the power to destroy the village with lightning if they so wished. He rebuked them not for presuming to have powers they did not have but for their lack of compassion. Jesus dissuaded them from being city-sackers, like the Dioscuri.

Castor and Polydeuces were known as the Lapersai, taken in antiquity to mean "sackers of Las."[31] Better known—and celebrated in art and dance—was their sacking of Aphidna. While Helen, sister of the Dioscuri, was still a child, Theseus abducted her, removed her to Aphidna, and guarded her with soldiers. Despite the guards, the Dioscuri rescued their sister and devastated the city.[32] It probably is no coincidence that this gospel's only contribution to traditions concerning James and John puts them in a role consistent with that of the Heavenly Twins.

### *Excursus: The Cult of Santiago*

Medieval Spanish Christians exalted Santiago, that is, James, into a victorious saint almost certainly modeled after Castor.[33] Early in its development,

the Santiago cult confused James the brother of John with James the brother of Jesus. To the chagrin of Marian theologians, James was even taken to be Jesus' twin; whereas Jesus was the Son of God, James was the son of Joseph.[34] Here one finds James as a Son of Thunder, sending lightning and rain from heaven and protecting sailors at sea. Pilgrims to the famous shrine at Santiago de Compostela to this day wear scallop shells as talismans, a practice the rest of the world celebrates in the delectable Coquilles St. Jacques. One ancient tradition claims that the apostle himself used a scallop shell to baptize new converts. One can explain these beliefs as developments of information provided in the New Testament without appeal to Dioscurism, but the New Testament cannot account for one of Santiago's most distinguishing traits, his appearances on a white horse flying through the sky.

As early as Homer and the *Homeric Hymns*, Castor was known as "tamer of horses."[35] Both Dioscuri were called "riders upon swift horses."[36] Pindar called the brothers themselves "white horses," and Euripides called them Zeus's "white colts."[37] Ovid said the brothers joined the hunt for the Calydonian boar "riding up . . . both on horses whiter than snow."[38] According to Lucian they rode horseback over the sea to help sailors.[39] In ancient art the Dioscuri were often mounted on horses or standing beside them.[40]

As we have seen, Castor and Polydeuces frequently appeared to sailors in storms at sea, but they also appeared to soldiers in times of battle. Cicero mentioned three such occasions. "For instance in the Latin War, at the critical battle of Lake Regillus [449 B.C.E.] . . . , Castor and Pollux were seen fighting on horseback in our ranks."[41] The event was commemorated on coins depicting the Dioscuri with their steeds. Long after the war, a depression in a rock on the shore of the lake "resembling a hoof print" was venerated as a print from Castor's horse.[42] On his return from a battlefield, a Roman official "was informed by two young warriors on white horses that king Perses [first century C.E.] had that very day been taken prisoner." These two youths "on white geldings" were taken to be the Dioscuri.[43] The victory of ten thousand Locrians against one hundred thirty thousand Crotonians at the River Sagra was inspired by the Dioscuri, though Cicero is unclear how they appeared to the troops.[44]

James the Son of Thunder appeared also to Spanish armies. According to the *Crónica general* of Alfonso the Learned, King Ramiro I saw a vision of James promising victory in a war against the Moors: "And so that you may doubt nothing of this that I tell you, tomorrow will you see me go into battle, on a white horse, with a white standard and a great shining sword in my hand."[45] The apostle appeared as scheduled, and the Spaniards won the Battle of Clavijo (822). Spaniards won the Battle of Simancas (939) thanks to the appearance of St. James and St. Emilian, in the view of the thirteenth-century poet Gonzalo de Berceo:

While the good people were in this doubt,
they turned their gaze and thoughts to heaven:
they saw two persons fair and shining,
much whiter were they than the recent snows.
They rode two horses whiter than crystal.

. . . . . .

their faces were angelic, their forms celestial,
they came down through the air at great speed,
they looked at the Moors with fierce glance,
the swords in their hand were frightful to see.[46]

"All in all, James came out of the blue some thirty-eight times, almost always on a white horse."[47]

The cult of Santiago was not the only Christian manifestation of Dioscurism, but it has been the most enduring. The depiction of James in the New Testament made him an attractive target, especially when he was confused with James, the brother of Jesus. No great leap was necessary to associate him with Castor, who also was related to thunder, was a sailor, conquered entire cities with his brother (who had been sired by a god), and died a violent death, yet was granted eternal life.

The relevance of the cult of Santiago to Mark's Boanerges is oblique. No evidence suggests that devotees of Santiago knew they had christianized one of the Heavenly Twins, let alone that Mark had done so centuries earlier. On the other hand, the cult of Santiago does suggest that Mark's depiction of the Sons of Thunder contained seminal images that somehow matured into full-blown Christian Dioscurism.

# 5

## *Murderous Usurpers*

Jesus' most determined and dangerous opponents are the Jewish authorities. Despite their various designations—Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, Herodians, elders, chief priests—"the religious authorities . . . form a united front opposed to Jesus and therefore constitute, literary-critically, a single, or collective, character."[1] Mark depicts them as usurpers of prerogatives rightly belonging to Jesus. "Consequently, the conflict between Jesus and the authorities in Mark's story is an extended clash over 'authority.' "[2]

Mark obviously did not invent conflicts between Jesus and Jewish leaders; they were traditional by his time and quite possibly reflect controversies of the historical Jesus. But Mark's distinctive depiction of them may be neither historical nor traditional. When viewed intertextually with the *Odyssey,* they play a role similar to that of Penelope's suitors, who usurped the authority of Odysseus's estate and were willing to kill to protect their privileged status.

Early in the *Odyssey* Homer warned the reader that the suitors planned to kill Telemachus on his return from Pylos—and Odysseus, too, if he should return.[3] Throughout the poem Homer reminds the reader of the suitors' murderous intention: "plotting in their hearts Telemachus' plunge to death"; "they plot to kill his beloved son [παῖδ' ἀγαπητόν] / on his way back home."[4] The suitors did not have their hearts set on sharing Penelope's bed, but on dividing her wealth among themselves. If they would win the wealth, they must remove the heir.

Similarly, Mark never lets the reader forget the plots of the Jewish authorities

against Jesus, God's beloved son [ὁ υἱὸς . . . ὁ ἀγαπητός].[5] Even in Galilee, Jesus' opponents have ties to Jerusalem, which prepares the reader to expect the worst when Jesus enters the city.[6] Indeed, when he finally returns to Jerusalem, the authorities look for an opportunity to kill him, seek to arrest him, try to entrap him in sedition, and conspire "to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him."[7]

Soon after Jesus arrived in Jerusalem he created a confrontation between himself and the temple authorities by driving merchants from the outer court.

> And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry any vessel through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.[8]

Some critics have argued that of all the stories about Jesus in the gospels, this demonstration of rage in the temple is the most historically authentic, insofar as it provides a plausible motivation for Jesus' execution. One can easily imagine Jesus, in the tradition of the prophets, railing against commercial abuses of the temple cultus and performing a symbolic action. Furthermore, some have claimed that the followers of Jesus would have been loathe to concoct this potentially embarrassing depiction of Jesus. One need look no further than traditional memories of an actual historical event to explain this Marcan episode.

That may be so, but this so-called Cleansing of the Temple displays intriguing parallels to Odysseus's *Mnesterophonia,* the Slaying of the Suitors. In Book 22 the King of Ithaca revealed his true identity and commenced his revenge.

> But Odysseus aimed and shot Antinous square in the throat
> and the point went stabbing clean through the soft neck and out—
> and off to the side he pitched, the cup dropped from his grasp
> as the shaft sank home, and the man's life-blood came spurting
> out his nostrils—
> thick red jets—
> a sudden thrust of his foot—
> he kicked away the table [τράπεζαν]—
> food showered across the floor,
> the bread and meats soaked in a swirl of bloody filth.
> The suitors burst into uproar all throughout the house
> when they saw their leader down. They leapt from their seats,
> milling about, desperate, scanning the stone walls—
> not a shield in sight, no rugged spear to seize.[9]

The overturning of tables, chairs, and vessels recurs throughout Odysseus's orgy of violence. For example, one suitor, "writhing over the table [τραπέζῃ] . . . curled and fell, and spilled upon the floor the food and the two-handled cup."[10] Artistic representations of this scene bear a striking resemblance to the Cleansing of the Temple. The typical portrayal includes "the presence of a *trapeza* or a small round table along with various accessories: drinking vessels, an amphora, a hydria, crowns, containers for game tokens, . . . cushions. But . . . all these items are in disarray: the *trapezai* become shields (cf. Homer *Odyssey* 22.74), the round tables are overturned along with the dishes they had supported."[11]

Several aspects of the Slaying of the Suitors correlate with Jesus' temple action. Like Odysseus entering his house from Eumaeus's hut, Jesus entered the temple, his "house," from Bethany. When Odysseus slew the suitors, chairs, tables, vessels, and food went flying; Jesus overturned "the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves," sending their contents to the ground, and prohibited the carrying of vessels through the temple. Mark went out of his way to justify Jesus' action, as Homer had justified Odysseus's: his enemies had devastated his home. The scriptural quotation on Jesus' lips is from Isa. 56:7, which identifies the temple as Jesus' "house" and which Mark interprets in light of Jer. 7:11, which mentions a "den of robbers," like Odysseus's house overrun by suitors. Even though one might concede that merchants and money changers occasionally swindled pilgrims, they were not thieves; indeed, they provided an important service for worshipers at the temple.

Compare Odysseus's speech to the suitors with Jesus' to those in the temple.

| *Odyssey* 22.34–36 and 42–43 | Mark 11:17–18 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus answered them:<br>"You dogs, you thought that I should never again come home [οἴκαδ'] from the land of the Trojans, seeing that *you wasted my house* [μοι . . . οἶκον]." . . . | He was teaching and saying,<br>"Is it not written,<br>'*My house* [οἶκός μου] shall be called a house [οἶκος] of prayer for all the nations'?<br>But *you have made it a den of robbers.*" |
| So he spoke,<br>and at his words<br>*pale fear seized them all.*<br>[The suitors sought to slay Odysseus.] | And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for *they were afraid of him.*[12] |

In both columns the hero denounces those who had ruined his house, and in both the robbers are afraid: the suitors because of Odysseus's threat to kill them, and the Jewish leaders because of Jesus' popularity with the masses. The suitors

promptly armed themselves to kill Odysseus and Telemachus; the Jewish authorities "kept looking for a way to kill" Jesus.

Following the Cleansing of the Temple, Jesus debates the Jewish leaders concerning his "authority" to expel the merchants from the temple. Embedded in this dispute is the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, where the evangelist depicts the authorities as treacherous vine-dressers to whom a landowner gave responsibilities for his vineyard while he was off in another country. They abused the owner's servants and even succeeded in killing his beloved son. The master will return to slay the vine-dressers and give the vineyard to others. The Jewish authorities, "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders," recognized Jesus' story as an allegory depicting themselves as the vine-dressers and Jesus as the "beloved son," whom they wanted to kill and soon would. The surface parallels to the *Odyssey* are obvious, but, to my knowledge, have been unexplored until now.

Like the vineyard owner in Mark, Odysseus was a builder who went on a journey and left his estate in the hands of his servants, some of whom joined the suitors in eating the rightful lord out of house and home. The servants who remained faithful to their lord continuously suffered abuse and humiliation.[13] Instead of respecting the lord's "beloved son," that is, Telemachus, the suitors plotted to kill him, suspecting that the owner, drowned at sea, would never return.[14] They had no regard for Telemachus's rightful authority over his father's estate, and each hoped he would become the owner of the estate by marrying Penelope. When Odysseus returned, he, like the vineyard owner in the parable, destroyed the suitors for their violent insolence.[15]

This comparison of the parable with the epic also suggests an answer to a problem within the parable that often has stumped interpreters. The tenants assumed that if they killed the heir they would inherit the vineyard, but no society would award property to an heir's murderers. The same problem appears in the epic. One of the suitors proposed that they kill Telemachus and distribute his possessions among them—never mind about Penelope: "[L]et us here devise for him a woeful death, for Telemachus, and let him not escape out of our hands. . . . [L]et us . . . seize him in the field far from the city on the road; and his property let us ourselves keep and his treasure, dividing them fairly among us."[16] "[H]ow the suitors collectively could have any lawful claim on his estate is hard to imagine. This simply illustrates the suitors' general propensity to treat Telemachus's property as if it were their own."[17] The same irrational greed applies to the wicked vinedressers in the parable: "Those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard."[18]

One might compare the parable with the epic as follows:

| *Odyssey* | The Parable of the Wicked Tenants |
| --- | --- |
| Odysseus built his house, | "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it . . . and built a watch tower; |
| put his servants in charge, | then he leased it to tenants |
| and went off to fight in Troy. | and went to another country." |
| The suitors abused the master's servants | The tenants abused the master's servants |
| and ate from the estate as though it | and kept the produce of the vineyard |
| were their own. | for themselves. |
| Telemachus, "the beloved son," sought | The master sent his "beloved son," the heir, |
| to regain his authority over the estate. | to collect the produce from the vineyard. |
| "Then *among them spoke Antinous. . . .* | "But *those tenants said to one another,* |
| *'[L]et us here devise for him a woeful* | 'This is the heir; come, *let us kill* |
| *death,* for Telemachus. . . . | *him, and the inheritance will be ours.*' |
| *[H]is property let us ourselves keep* | |
| *and his treasure,* dividing them fairly | |
| among us.' " | |
| The suitors laid an ambush for the son, | So they seized him, killed him, and threw |
| but he eluded them. | him out of the vineyard. |
| Odysseus returned, | What will the owner of the vineyard do? |
| destroyed the suitors, | He will come and destroy the tenants |
| and reestablished his authority. | and give the vineyard to others." |
| [The suitors had to be cautious for fear | The authorities recognized that Jesus |
| the residents of Ithaca might drive | spoke this parable against them and |
| them from the island.] | "wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd." |

Q contained a denunciation of Pharisees for their delight in social privileges. Mark obviously knew this saying—perhaps directly from Q—but added several telling elements reminiscent of the suitors.[19]

| Q 11:43 (= Matt. 23:6–7) | Mark 12:39–40 |
| --- | --- |
| Woe to you Pharisees! | Beware of the scribes, |
| For you love to have the seat of honor | who like to walk around in long robes, |
| in the synagogues | |
| and to be greeted with respect in the | and to be greeted with respect in the |
| market places. | market places, |
| | and to have the best seats in the |
| | synagogues and places of honor at |
| | banquets! They devour widows' houses |

> and for the sake of appearance say
> long prayers. They will receive the
> greater condemnation.

Mark's version of this saying adds, among other things, loving "places of honor at banquets" and the devouring of "widow's houses." Mark did not state what he meant by the latter phrase, and scholars have proposed a variety of historical explanations. The solution probably has less to do with the scribes of history than with the rhetorics of denunciation. To accuse a group of defrauding widows is to depict them as lowlife scum, deserving of "greater condemnation." In light of Homer's *Odyssey,* Mark's additions to the saying once again liken the Jewish authorities to Penelope's suitors, who vied with each other for honors at perpetual banquets, devoured the house of Penelope, whom they considered a widow, and therefore deserved their deaths at the hands of Odysseus.[20]

Mark's Greek for "they devour the houses of widows," οἱ κατεσθίοντες τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν, finds several parallels among Homer's depictions of the suitors. The poet often speaks of their devouring Odysseus's οἶκος, "house."[21] Because of their devastation of the home of a presumed widow, the suitors became personifications of hubris and greed.[22]

Immediately after Jesus' denunciation of the Jewish authorities, Mark contrasts them with a poor widow, whom the reader might reasonably consider an example of the widows whom "the scribes" had exploited. Although this widow contributed but a few cents to the temple coffers, she sacrificed "her entire livelihood," which therefore made her offering more valuable than the hefty donations of the wealthy.[23] Mark's depiction of the Jewish authorities and the poor widow corresponds to Homer's contrast between the suitors, who devoured Odysseus's house, and Penelope, a presumed widow and a model of hospitality. She gave generously from her rapidly dwindling estate, while the suitors were stingy even when distributing what they had stolen. Only Mark and Luke contrast the Jewish authorities with poor widows.[24] Luke does so by dint of his dependence on Mark; Mark does so by dint of his dependence on Homer.

In addition to this widow, two other minor characters derive their identities vis-à-vis the Jewish authorities: Judas, insofar as he, like Melanthius, betrayed his master to his foes, and Barabbas, insofar as he, like Irus, is a rogue whom the murderous rivals preferred to the rightful owner of the house.

Odysseus's servant Melanthius, convinced his master had died at sea, switched allegiance to the suitors and provided them the livestock they required for their enormous appetites. In return the suitors treated him as a peer at their feasts, as in the following passage: "At once he entered [Odysseus's palace] and sat down among the suitors opposite Eurymachus, for he loved him best of all. Then by

him those that served set a portion of meat, and the revered housekeeper brought and set before him bread, for him to eat."[25] Melanthius came not to serve but to be served.

Melanthius's role in the epic resembles that of Judas in Mark. Judas, too, switched loyalties for greed; the authorities promised to give him money if he would betray Jesus to them.[26] Like Melanthius, Judas took his place at a meal to which he had no right as a traitor. "And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me. . . . It is one of the twelve who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' "[27]

At one point in the epic, Melanthius came dangerously close to recognizing his master and unmasking him for the suitors: "Hear me now, suitors of the glorious queen, regarding this stranger, for in truth I have seen him before. Truly it was the swineherd that led him here, but of the man himself I do not know surely from where he claims he was born."[28] Ironically, Melanthius did not know the birthplace of the stranger, even though he was dining at the very spot.[29]

Melanthius's primary role in the Slaying of the Suitors was to supply them arms. "Melanthius, the goatherd, mounted up by the steps of the hall to the storerooms of Odysseus. Thence he took twelve shields, as many spears, and as many helmets of bronze with thick plumes of horsehair, and went his way, and quickly brought and gave them to the suitors."[30] Judas, too, was associated with weapons, for at Jesus' arrest he arrived with "a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders."[31]

After Odysseus and Telemachus had slain the suitors, "out they led Melanthius through the doorway and the court, and cut off his nostrils and his ears with the pitiless bronze, and tore out his genitals for the dogs to eat raw, and cut off his hands and his feet in the anger of their hearts."[32] Mark does not narrate a punishment for Judas, even though Jesus had said it would be better had he never been born. What Mark lacked, later authors supplied with three different accounts of his punitive death.[33]

Mark's possible indebtedness to Homer's Melanthius also may explain the awkward motivation for the bribe from the chief priests. Jesus had entered the temple amid the accolades of the crowds; he had chased the money changers and merchants from the temple, incurring the murderous wrath of "the chief priests and the scribes"; he had challenged the authority of the "chief priests, the scribes, and the elders" and intimated that they would perish for their violence; he had disputed with them in the temple for several days.[34] Despite this public accessibility, the "chief priests" paid Judas to identify Jesus for them, apparently because

they could not recognize him on their own. Mark seems clumsily to have retained this motif of recognition from the epic. None of the suitors had ever met Odysseus and therefore could not have recognized Odysseus without an informant.[35]

At the beginning of *Odyssey* 18, one reads of a beggar named Arnaeus, nicknamed Irus, because, like Iris, the messenger goddess, "he used to run on errands when anyone bade him." Irus was "known for his greedy belly, eating and drinking without end."[36] When he arrived at the palace, he discovered that another beggar, Odysseus in disguise, was taking over his territory, so he told him to give way or risk a drubbing. Indeed, the suitors egged him on: "Do you not see that everyone is winking at me," said Irus, "and urging me to drag you?"[37] Although Odysseus could have dispatched the rogue with a single blow, he pulled his punch and merely disabled him, lest he arouse suspicions concerning his identity.

This scene skillfully and ironically places Odysseus, the rightful lord of the estate, in the role of a beggar who must contend with a violent, greedy, oversized ne'er-do-well for table scraps. His rival, though a tramp, was nicknamed after a goddess. The most unmistakable irony comes at the end of the fight, when the suitors praise Odysseus, the victorious beggar: "May Zeus grant you, stranger, and the other gods, what you desire most and the dearest wish of your heart." What he wanted most, of course, was to slay the very people praising him.[38] Again, one of the suitors raised his cup to toast the victor: "Hail, father stranger; may happy fortune be yours in time to come, though now you are beset by many sorrows." Odysseus will have "happy fortune" only when those who are toasting him are dead.[39]

Mark's answer to Irus is Barabbas. After the Jewish authorities had formally condemned Jesus, they handed him over to Pilate. "Now at the festival he [Pilate] used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked."[40] No independent attestation exists for this most unlikely custom; Mark seems to have created it to provide a contest between the Lord and the bandit, similar to that between Odysseus and Irus.

| *Odyssey* 18.1–3 and 6 | Mark 15:7 |
| --- | --- |
| *Now there came up a public beggar who was accustomed to beg* through the town . . . , and was known for a greedy belly, eating and drinking without end. . . . *Irus all the young men called him.* | *Now there was a prisoner named* B *arabbas* in prison with the rebels *who had committed murder* during the insurrection. |

Both Irus and Barabbas were violent rogues, and both bore signifying names: Irus from the goddess Iris; Barabbas from the Aramaic for "son of [the] father."

Mark probably expected his reader to see the irony of a contest between two sons of Abba: a revolutionary and a true "King of the Jews."[41] The comparison of Barabbas and Jesus is even more striking in manuscripts of Matthew's parallel to Mark 15:7, which read, "Jesus Barabbas."[42] It is likely that these manuscripts preserve Matthew's original reading and, if so, Matthew apparently saw the contrast with Jesus, Son of God, and made the comparison more obvious by adding the name Jesus before Barabbas.

Just as the suitors had instigated the fight and sided with Irus, the Jewish crowd asked Pilate to release a prisoner to them and, stirred up by "the chief priests," sided with Barabbas instead of their king. Jesus they wanted to crucify. Just as Homer had used Irus to inculpate the suitors, Mark used Barabbas to inculpate the Jewish authorities.

In Mark, too, there are ironies. A Roman judge called Jesus "King of the Jews," but the crowd and the chief priests preferred a murderer to their rightful king. By killing Jesus the Jewish authorities secured their own destruction, like the murderous tenants of the parable, whom the lord of the vineyard, the father of the victim, will slay. The epic and the Gospel both accomplish their ironies by keeping the identities of the heroes a secret from other characters, who favor a rogue instead.

Mark ends Jesus' trial before Pilate with yet another irony, one that parallels the toast at the end of the Irus incident.

*Odyssey* 18.118–22

And Antinous set before him a great
paunch, filled with fat and blood,
and Amphinomus took up two loaves
from the basket and set them before him,
*and pledged him in a cup of gold, and*
*said: "Hail* [Χαῖρε], *father stranger;* may
happy fortune be yours in time to come."

Mark 15:17–19

And they [the soldiers] clothed him in a
purple cloak;[43]
and after twisting some thorns into a
crown, they put it on him.
*And they began saluting him,*
"*Hail* [Χαῖρε], *King of the Jews!*"
They struck his head with a reed, spat
upon him, and knelt down in homage
to him.

This is the only instance where χαῖρε (or, for that matter, the plural, χαίρετε) occurs as an address in Mark. Its use here and in *Odyssey* 18—in a remarkably similar context—hardly seems accidental.

Homer and Mark thus use Irus and Barabbas to intensify the guilt of their heroes' opponents. Instead of siding with the righteous, the opponents favored a boorish beggar or a revolutionary. Ironically, the suitors toasted Odysseus, "Hail, father stranger," wishing him "happy fortune," unaware that soon he would have

his good fortune at their expense. Ironically, the soldiers saluted Jesus, "Hail, King of the Jews," unaware that he in fact was a king and that he would indeed reign.

Given the popularity of the epic in antiquity, one can hardly doubt that Homer's portrayal of Odysseus as a suffering hero, his crew as foolish weaklings, and the suitors as murderous rivals were accessible to Mark. The evangelist probably also knew the Dioscuri as sons of Zeus, the thunder god, often depicted on the right and left of a seated deity. Mark's borrowings have analogies in ancient comparisons of Odysseus with the sufferings of others and in comparisons of the Slaying of the Suitors with other massacres. For example, this scene also inspired the destruction of the lecherous rogues in the *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre*.[44] Josephus probably had the Slaying of the Suitors in mind when describing David's annihilation of the Amalekites: "Falling suddenly upon them, he made a great slaughter of them, for, being unarmed and expecting no such thing but intent upon drinking and revelry, they were all an easy prey. Some, being surprised at the outspread tables (τραπεζῶν), were massacred beside them, and their streaming blood swept victual and food away; others were drinking each other's health when he slew them; still others, under the influence of strong drink, were plunged in sleep; while those who had been quick enough to put on their armour and make a stand against him — these too he cut to pieces with no less ease than those who lay defenceless on the ground."[45]

The very volume of similarities suggests imitation. Jesus, like Odysseus, was a carpenter who suffered many things, returned to his fatherland without honor, overturned tables, chairs, and vessels in outrage because his home had become a den of thieves, was betrayed by one of his intimate associates, was despised by his opponents in favor of a rogue, and one day would return violently against them. Jesus' disciples often resemble Odysseus's crew in their folly and weakness; the Boanerges echo the Dioscuri; the Jewish authorities, who devoured the houses of widows and sought to kill "the beloved son," play the part of the suitors; the widow, Judas, and Barabbas function like Penelope, Melanthius, and Irus. The similarities in characterization are dense.

Many of these similarities, though not all, follow a similar order. Early in both books the reader learns of the murderous intentions of the rivals, whose hubris and culpability steadily escalate. Odysseus's crew and Jesus' disciples first appear positively but consistently fail each hero, until, in the end, he must face his foes alone. Like Penelope, Melanthius, and Irus, the generous widow, Judas, and Barabbas come into the narrative only after the hero has returned home. The most noteworthy difference in order is the reversal of the arguments over authority and the cleansing of the house. Homer used the Slaying of the Suitors to

conclude the controversy over authority, whereas Mark used the Cleansing of the Temple to initiate the controversy with the Jewish authorities.

Several details in the comparisons are distinctive, such as the descriptions of Jesus as a carpenter and the disciples as sailors; the request of James and John, sons of thunder, to enjoy eternal glory similar to that of Castor and Polydeuces, sons of the thunder god; the claim that the Jewish authorities sought the best seats at banquets and devoured the houses of widows; the identification of the temple as Jesus' house, which had become a den of thieves; the contrast between the protagonist and a rogue championed by the rivals. Mark's depiction of the Cleansing of the Temple contains unusual details that appear also in the Slaying of the Suitors: fallen tables, chairs, and vessels. The earliest evangelist may have supplied these flags to refer the reader to his models.[46]

Finally, these comparisons are interpretable, for they explain several aspects of Mark that have stumped interpreters, including the authors of Matthew and Luke. Parallels with the *Odyssey* may account for the carpentry of Jesus, the joint naming and peculiar request of the sons of Zebedee, the foolishness, weakness, and failure of the disciples, and the outrageous caricature of the Jewish authorities as venal murderers.

Mark has not only imitated his models, he has emulated them. Jesus suffered even more than Odysseus insofar as he was killed. Zeus granted the Dioscuri their request for special treatment after death, but Jesus refused the request of the Boanerges; they would have to earn this honor through suffering. Odysseus purged his house of usurpers by mercilessly slaying them; Jesus purged his house, the temple, of usurpers merely by expelling them. This playfulness between literary imitation and transvaluative emulation runs throughout Mark.

# 6

## *Recognitions*

Few aspects of the Gospel of Mark have proved more controversial than its so-called messianic secret, or better, its Son-of-God secret. Jesus avoids publicity, muzzles those he heals, and silences demons who recognize him. Because the earliest evangelist never stated unequivocally why his Jesus maintained secrecy, he left the door open for speculation. Solutions have included Jesus' own eagerness to avoid publicity lest people misinterpret him as a political messiah, the attempt of pre-Marcan tradition to explain why Jesus had never claimed to be the Messiah, notions concerning the temporary hiddenness of the apocalyptic Son of Man, traditions of a hidden Gnostic redeemer, Mark's opposition to theologies that did not refer to Jesus as a messiah (like Q!), and opposition to a christology based on miracle working instead of the cross.

This chapter analyzes Mark in light of secrecy in the *Odyssey,* where this motif plays an enormous, indeed essential, role.[1] To my knowledge, no one has attempted to compare the two works in this respect, even though both generate their plots from the carefully protected secrecy of their protagonists.

One of the suitors scolded another for abusing Odysseus disguised as a beggar: "What if perchance he be some god come down from heaven? And the gods do, in the guise of strangers from afar, put on all manner of shapes, and visit the cities, beholding the violence and the righteousness of men."[2] This theological dictum, older than the epic, depicts the gods as guardians of the moral order, who, in

disguise, visit mortals to test them by learning how they treat strangers. The gods bless those who honor strangers and punish those who do not.[3] Here Homer voices explicitly what the reader of the epic knew as early as Book 1. When Athena disguised herself as Mentes and visited Telemachus, the youth treated his guest with a generous meal even before learning his / her identity. The suitors, on the other hand, ignored the guest and continued their games and feeding frenzy. Telemachus passed the test of hospitality; the suitors did not and in the end would pay dearly for their bad manners.

Homeric gods usually masked themselves to mortals. When Hermes appeared to Odysseus, he took the form of a young man; when Athena appeared to Telemachus, she took the form of Mentes or Mentor; when she appeared to Nausicaa, it was as one of her young friends; and when she appeared to Odysseus, it was as a maidservant, or a young shepherd, or as a woman, her most natural and recognizable form.[4]

In Book 13 Athena appeared to the hero as a young man and tested him. After he passed the test—by showing himself to be a consummate liar!—the goddess transformed herself again, this time into her own likeness so that Odysseus would recognize her. Then, in a stroke of narratological genius, Homer's goddess miraculously disguised Odysseus as a beggar, so that the suitors would not recognize him.[5] Odysseus himself now had become like a god: his impenetrable disguise made possible a sequence of πεῖραι, "tests" or "trials," in which he ascertained the faithfulness of his servants, his wife, and his father.[6] The warning of the suitor was not far wide of the mark: the beggar was indeed like "some god come down from heaven," like the gods who "put on all manner of shapes, and visit the cities, beholding the violence and the righteousness of men."[7]

Odysseus's secrecy created suspense; should his foes unmask him, they would kill him, just as Clytemnestra and Aegisthus had slain Agamemnon when he returned from Troy. Thus Odysseus repeatedly used his wits to conceal his identity and had to curb himself lest, by performing feats of strength, he arouse suspicions among the suitors. Because the reader knows the identity of the hero, hidden from most characters within the narrative, he or she repeatedly detects irony. Situational "irony demands that the audience know something the fictional characters do not; we can see, but they are blind."[8]

Once Odysseus had tested the loyalty of his household, he could safely reveal himself, but now it was he who might be put to the test and have to produce a sign (σῆμα) that he was who he said he was. The most famous of these signs was his scar, a thigh wound from a wild boar, but he had other signs as well. For example, according to Book 19, Penelope told the beggar (Odysseus in disguise), "I feel I must test you as to whether or not you did in truth entertain my husband."[9] The beggar persuaded her by describing in graphic detail Odysseus's distinctive attire

and by identifying his attending servant. Penelope "recognized the sure signs [σήματ'] that Odysseus told her."[10] In this instance, Odysseus did not reveal his identity but merely his reliability as witness of her husband's situation.

In every other testing of the hero, his signs demonstrate that he was indeed himself. For example, Penelope again tested Odysseus by making an intentionally false statement about their bed. He immediately recognized her dissimulation and described his careful crafting of the bed down to its supporting thongs. "Thus do I declare to you this sign [σῆμα]." The sign succeeded: "Her knees were loosened where she sat, and her heart melted, as she recognized the signs [σήματ'] . . . which Odysseus showed her."[11] Laertes, his father, refused to accept his son's self-disclosure without an accompanying sign. Odysseus bared his telltale thigh and accurately described the fruit trees and vines that his father had given him in his youth. Then Laertes "recognized the signs [σήματ'] which Odysseus showed him without error."[12]

When convinced that Odysseus was who he said he was, other characters responded dramatically. His dog died; his family and faithful servants wept profusely, kissed, and embraced the hero; his enemies tried to flee in panic. Odysseus invariably insisted that those with knowledge of his identity maintain utter silence so that he could continue to test the fidelity of others and avoid detection by his enemies.

Similarly, at the beginning of Mark's Gospel the reader gains information not available to characters within the narrative apart from Jesus himself and the demons; namely, that Jesus of Nazareth actually is God's Son.[13] The discrepancy between the reader's understanding and that of other characters in the Gospel creates ironies similar to those in the epic. "The characters in the story are blind victims of the irony of the situation, while the reader sees the ironic contrast between what the speaker says and the way things really are. For example, when the opponents ridicule Jesus for claiming to be king of the Jews, the reader sees that the statements which they intend to be ironic sarcasm really are true: Jesus can prophesy; he really is king of the Jews; his death will secure the destruction of the temple; and he cannot save himself except by losing his life."[14]

As God's Son, Jesus possesses superhuman powers that function as signs of his identity, but herein lies their danger. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus' miracles were signs that rendered him vulnerable to discovery by his enemies. The Jewish authorities, who had made his "house" a "den of robbers," were unwilling to accept any superlative claim for him, and when he confirmed that he was indeed "the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One," they immediately condemned him to death. Throughout the Gospel, then, Jesus maintained secrecy concerning his identity as Messiah/Son of God by sheer necessity. Like Odysseus's scar and great strength, Jesus' miracles, especially his powers to exorcise and raise the dead,

were signs of his identity that he had to conceal from his foes. Only by prolonging the inevitable through secrecy would he be able to teach his followers concerning the kingdom of God.

This understanding of secrecy in Mark deviates from most interpretations by proposing that the disclosure of the secret takes place not at the empty tomb but at Jesus' Sanhedrin trial. Though scholars vigorously debate Mark's motives for Jesus' secrecy, they generally concur that Mark's Jesus avoided the titles Messiah and Son of God because they were inappropriate prior to the resurrection, as Mark seems to imply by having Jesus command Peter, James, and John, while descending the Mount of Transfiguration, "to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean."[15] This passage also implies that Jesus wished to conceal his identity from everyone, not just from his enemies.

But Mark's Jesus does not guard his identity uniformly from everyone. This chapter argues the following four theses. First, when Jesus is among friends, he is least prone to require secrecy. Second, when he is among Gentiles, he shows somewhat more caution, but even here he seldom insists on silence. Third, Jesus is most cautious about publicity in Jewish environments when the authorities themselves are absent. Fourth, in passages where Jesus and the Jewish leaders appear together he never insists on secrecy. Instead, he cleverly clouds his identity in ambiguous titles, metaphors, allegories, and counterquestions and thus provides his opponents insufficient grounds for killing him. Only at his trial does he reveal himself as the Messiah/Son of God.

## *Among Friends*

When Jesus was among his closest associates, when the risk of attracting the attention of the Jewish leaders was minimal, he seldom insisted on secrecy. For instance, one finds no such commands after Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, after he stilled the storm, after he walked on water, or after he withered a fig tree with a curse. Only the disciples had seen these miracles. Commands to secrecy also are lacking in the two stories of the feeding of multitudes, probably because only the disciples witnessed the miraculous multiplications, as commentators frequently have observed. The only two instances of Jesus silencing disciples follow unambiguous identifications of him as the Messiah or Son of God, which greatly heighten the risk of disclosure. Furthermore, both episodes have possible parallels in the epic, in which two of Odysseus's closest associates learn his identity only to have the hero tell them to be silent.

Midway in the narrative, Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was.

Their answers show that his attempts at remaining incognito successfully kept the masses baffled, for they suspected he might be John the Baptist, or Elijah, or another of the prophets. Jesus then asked the disciples directly, "But who do *you* say that I am?" Peter, apparently speaking for them all, answered, " 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him."[16] Jesus silenced Peter not because he answered wrongly, as some interpreters have thought, but precisely because he answered correctly. If broadcast, this identification might come to the attention of the authorities.

Peter's declaration, conventionally called his Confession, might better be called his Recognition. In fact, the scene resembles Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus from the scar on his leg. "Yes, yes! You are Odysseus—oh dear boy— / I couldn't know you before . . . / not till I touched the body of my king."[17] Odysseus then grabbed Eurycleia by the throat and said, "Nurse, you want to kill me? . . . / But now you know, / now that a god has flashed it in your mind, / quiet! not a word to anyone in the house." Eurycleia scolded him for doubting her loyalty and promised to be as tight-lipped "as hard stone or iron."[18] Peter and Eurycleia both recognized the identities of their masters, articulated their recognitions with "you are X," and were told in no uncertain terms to keep silent about it.

The only other silencing of Jesus' closest associates occurs after his Transfiguration, where three of the disciples heard a voice from heaven declaring him to be God's Son. "[H]e ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead."[19] This statement need not mean that the empty tomb was the revelation of Jesus' secret. It could also mean that Easter morning was the first time that the disciples would have had opportunity to declare what they had seen on the mountain without endangering their Lord; by then the damage already would have been done. Furthermore, only after the resurrection would the disciples have understood Jesus' Transfiguration; only then would they comprehend "what this rising of the dead could mean." As we shall see, the Transfiguration resembles Odysseus's self-revelation to Telemachus in *Odyssey* 16 and his insistence that the boy tell no one his true identity.

Even though the so-called Confession at Caesarea Philippi and the Transfiguration both present Jesus commanding his disciples to keep his identity a secret, he does so not because he distrusts them but because in both instances his identity as God's Son or Messiah is revealed unambiguously. These are the only instances of Jesus silencing those closest to him.

### *Among Gentiles*

When among Gentiles, Jesus shows only mild anxiety about rumors of his miracle working. At the conclusion of the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac, instead of a command to silence, one finds Jesus ordering the demoniac, "Go

home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."[20] Presumably Jesus could risk such publicity in Gentile Jerash. In "the region of Tyre," a Gentile city, he did not want people to know he was there, but when he exorcised the daughter of a Syrophoenecian woman, "Greek by origin," he did not insist she keep silent. On the other hand, Jesus healed a deaf man in a Gentile area and commanded those who observed the healing "to tell no one."[21] This is the only place in Mark where Jesus silences a character in a predominantly Gentile environment.

### *Among Jews*

In Jewish contexts where the religious authorities are absent, Jesus is most likely to insist on silence. While he was teaching at a synagogue at Capernaum, a demoniac identified him as "'The Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'"[22] Jesus could not disguise his identity from the preternatural realm, for the demons invariably recognized him.[23] The placement of this exorcism in a synagogue heightens the danger; the religious authorities might learn from those in the synagogue that demons proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God. If the leaders were to ask him what he thought of the demon's statement, he would have to agree with it and thus risk the charge of blasphemy.

Again in Jewish Capernaum, Jesus healed many "and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him."[24] Later, crowds thronged to him, both Jews and Gentiles, and again he healed and exorcised. "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God!' But he sternly ordered them not to make him known."[25] This command to secrecy appears in one of Mark's several so-called summaries. The use of "unclean spirits" in the plural and the verbs consistently in the imperfect tense imply that such tattletale demons bedeviled him constantly.

Jesus cured a blind man and ordered him to go home: "Do not even go into the village," that is, Jewish Bethsaida.[26] Jairus, "one of the leaders of the synagogue," asked Jesus to heal his daughter. When Jesus learned that the girl had died, he took with him only his three closest companions—Peter, James, and John. On arriving at the girl's home, he commanded everyone to leave except for her parents. After he revived her, "he strictly ordered them that no one should know this."[27] Jesus must use these extreme precautions here because of the spectacular nature of the miracle. If Jairus, a leader of a synagogue, were to broadcast the girl's revival, word might get to the Jewish authorities. Even though Jesus does not insist on secrecy after every miracle in a Jewish environment, he does so more consistently than when among Gentiles.

This interpretation of Jesus' secrecy might explain the curious exchange be-

tween Jesus and the leper in Mark 1:40–45: "A leper came to him begging him, and said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.'" Even though most textual witnesses next read "moved with pity [σπλαγχνισθείς]," the more difficult—and for that reason preferable—reading is "infuriated [ὀργισθείς]." In this case, the story would continue, "Infuriated, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean." Readers ancient and modern have puzzled over why Jesus was angry at the leper. Perhaps Jesus already knew that he would disobey his command to secrecy (verse 45), or perhaps he took exception at the framing of the request—"If you choose, you can make me clean"—as though he might not have wanted to heal the leper. The immediate context and the continuation of the story, however, suggest another explanation. If Jesus were to heal the leper, he would necessarily expose the activity to the authorities, for it was the only cure that, according to Leviticus 14, required a demonstration of purity before a priest and the observance of an elaborate ritual, including bathing, shaving of the body, and complicated sacrifices. By healing a leper, then, Jesus risked exposing his powers to the very authorities he wanted to keep in the dark. Despite the risk and still infuriated, Jesus healed him. "After growling at him, he thrust him out at once, saying to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'"[28] Apparently the leper was not even to tell the priest who it was who had healed him but merely to demonstrate his clean condition, as required by the Torah. "But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country," presumably for safety.[29]

### *Among Jewish Leaders*

When Jesus and the authorities do come into direct confrontation, the danger of exposure is greatest and the suspense consequently highest. In these settings the demons fortunately keep silent, and Jesus keeps the authorities flummoxed concerning his identity by evasion, metaphors, and sheer wit, much like Odysseus among the suitors. Even though his performance of miracles might blow his cover, he risked detection in order to help the needy. He healed a paralytic in the presence of "some of the scribes," healed a man with a withered hand on the sabbath while "the Pharisees" were in the synagogue, and cast out a demon in the vicinity of some "scribes."[30] These are the only miracles Jesus performs in the presence of the authorities, and quite predictably none of them ends with a command to silence. The people from whom Jesus wanted most to keep his identity a secret had themselves witnessed these feats of supernatural power.

At other times, Jesus refused to produce miracles before his rivals. According to 8:11–12, "The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.'" Mark's σημεῖον is the equivalent of Homer's σῆμα; both mean "sign." In the *Odyssey,* of course, characters test the hero by asking for signs that he was who he said he was, and he complied, but only for those who had proven to be faithful. In the presence of his enemies, however, he avoided all revealing utterances and acts. Similarly, Jesus knew that the Pharisees were a wicked "generation," and for this reason he refused to perform the requested sign.[31]

Despite his efforts to remain incognito, the authorities became increasingly suspicious of this stranger, but they, like the crowds, had no inkling that he might be the Messiah/Son of God. Instead they guessed that he might be "John the baptizer . . . raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." Others championed Elijah or some other redivivus Jewish prophet.[32] Matters came to a head when Jesus cast merchants from the temple, prompting "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders" to ask Jesus directly: "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" If Jesus were to answer correctly, he would have said that the temple was his house and that he thus had unequaled authority over it as God's Son. Had he said this, the authorities would have sought his death at once. Jesus cleverly avoided declaring the source of his authority by putting his interrogators on the defensive with a counterquestion about the authority of John the Baptist, whom the crowds considered a true prophet.[33]

One might propose as counterevidence the healing of the paralytic in 2:1–12, where Jesus openly defended his authority to act as an agent of God. Here Jesus secretly entered Capernaum, but the crowds somehow discovered that he was staying in a certain home, and there they thronged, including "some of the scribes." Unable to wedge through the crowd, four men dug through a roof and lowered the paralytic to Jesus, who then pronounced forgiveness of the man's sins and healed him.

When Jesus told the paralytic "your sins are forgiven," he nearly exposed his identity to his enemies, who asked, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark expects the reader to answer, "God's Son can, too." This is precisely what Jesus cannot say, for then he would have revealed his secret at the beginning of his career, and the authorities almost certainly would have shortened it—and the Gospel.

To get Jesus out of this perilous situation, Mark supplies him with cleverness that might have impressed a trickster like Odysseus. Jesus asked the scribes, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand

up and take your mat and walk?' "[34] Telling the paralytic to stand is the more difficult of the two statements insofar as its efficacy is verifiable in a manner impossible for a mere declaration of forgiveness. By healing the paralytic, then, Jesus demonstrated that he had the authority to forgive sins. He did not say that he had authority to forgive sins as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man, employing a notoriously ambiguous title that applied even to Jewish prophets. To be sure, he came dangerously close to revealing his identity to his opponents, but at least for the moment he cleverly avoided the charge of blasphemy, a capital offense. He demonstrated healing powers and compassion that shamed his quibbling detractors while at the same time keeping them baffled about his identity.

As early as Mark 3:6 the Jewish leaders knew Jesus threatened their authority, witnessed his powers of exorcism and healing, and decided to kill him, but before the trial they had never heard from him a declaration of his identity. They heard it for the first and only time at his trial, a scene that resembles Odysseus's revelation to the suitors.

All "the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled" for a meeting of the Sanhedrin and "were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none."[35] Mark does not indicate what kind of testimony they sought, but the context suggests they hoped someone had heard him speaking against the temple, which some "false witnesses" had claimed, or vaunting himself as the Messiah. They could find no such testimony. To this extent, Jesus' secrecy had held. "Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' Jesus said, 'I am; and "you will see the son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power," and "coming with the clouds of heaven."' "[36] Here Jesus identifies himself by using "I am" with the predicate "the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One" and states that at sometime in the future the authorities would see him coming as the glorious Son of Man. As commentators routinely and rightly observe, Mark's Jesus here alludes to Dan. 7:13 (LXX): "[A]nd behold, he was coming with the clouds of heaven like a Son of Man." In the Gospel, however, this scriptural allusion functions as a revelation, and in that respect it also resembles the self-disclosure scenes in the *Odyssey,* where the hero identifies himself in the first-person singular as the one who at last has come home. In each of the following passages, Odysseus reveals his identity in the first-person singular as the one who has come home after so many years.

To Telemachus: "I here, I [ἐγώ], . . . after sufferings and many wanderings, have come [ἥλυθον] in the twentieth year to my native land."[37]

To Eurycleia: "[A]nd now after many grievous toils I am come [ἥλυθον] in the twentieth year to my native land."[38]

To his faithful servants: "At home now in truth am I here before you, my very self [αὐτὸς ἐγώ]. After many grievous toils I am come [ἥλυθον] in the twentieth year to my native land."[39]

To the suitors: "[Y]ou thought that I should never again come home [οὔ μ' . . . οἴκαδ' ἱκέσθαι] from the land of the Trojans, seeing that you wasted my house."[40]

To Laertes: "That man am I [αὐτὸς ἐγώ], father, myself, standing here, of whom you ask, come back [ἥλυθον] in the twentieth year to the land of my fathers."[41]

Jesus' self-disclosure to the Sanhedrin and Odysseus's to these characters share a self-identification (εἰμί, ἐγώ, or με + infinitive), an expressed or implied predicate ("the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One," "myself," or "that man . . . of whom you ask"), and a statement concerning the hero's return: Odysseus at last had returned; Jesus would return sometime in the future. When speaking of Odysseus's return, Homer generally used a poetic form of ἔρχομαι (ἥλυθον). Mark's participle for Jesus' return is ἐρχόμενον. The Jewish authorities would "see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, . . . coming with the clouds of heaven"; that is, he would return in power and judgment, like Odysseus against the suitors.

Whenever characters in the epic recognized the identity of the beggar, they responded with astonishment and a dramatic gesture. If they had been loyal to the hero, they responded with embraces and tears. However, when the suitors recognized him, "pale fear seized them all, and each man gazed about to see how he might escape utter destruction."[42] The reactions of Jesus' judges were dramatic, too: "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' All of them condemned him as deserving death."[43]

This response of the authorities might at first suggest that secrecy in the *Odyssey* and Mark function differently. The self-revelation of Odysseus results in the destruction of the suitors, but the self-revelation of Jesus results in his own destruction. Jesus' answer, however, indicates that his opponents would see him return in victory over them. He would make a second nostos. One might also object that, whereas the authorities refused to acknowledge Jesus' identity, the suitors acknowledged Odysseus at once. In this respect, Mark indeed seems to have transformed the Homeric recognition scene, but not beyond recognition. The reader knows that the Jewish authorities *should* have accepted Jesus' statement as an admission of his true identity. That they failed to do so only magnifies their guilt.

This chapter has argued that the disclosure of Jesus' secret takes place on Maundy Thursday, not Easter Sunday, as most interpreters have thought. Mark's model for this literary strategy was the second half of the *Odyssey,* where the

hero silenced those who recognized him to avoid detection by the suitors. Similarly, Jesus silenced demons and mortals to avoid detection by the murderous authorities, illegitimate usurpers of his home, the temple. Once the authorities cornered him into stating he was the Son of God, they wasted no time in seeing to his destruction.[44]

# 7

## *Sleeping Sailors*

In no gospel does Jesus sail more often than in Mark, and, as far as we now know, no other author independent of Mark ever related Jesus to things nautical. To be sure, our sources about Jesus entirely independent of Mark are few, but neither Paul, nor Q, nor independent traditions in the other gospels, canonical or otherwise, supply the slightest reason to think Jesus' feet ever left terra firma or that his disciples could have distinguished a mackerel from a bluegill.[1] One of Mark's most enduring innovations was painting traditions about Jesus against a landscape replete with mountains, uninhabited regions, villages, and especially a sea.[2] He presented four of the disciples as erstwhile fishermen who were able to provide Jesus with the boat that later would transport him across the Chinnereth. He told them to have it ready for him, so that he could avoid the crowds, and once used it as his pulpit. The disciples sailed with Jesus across the lake several times, enduring a storm and rowing against contrary winds. Once they failed to provision the ship with enough bread, an oversight unpardonable for ancient sailors, who often had to traverse vast expanses. Several episodes echo sailing tales in the *Odyssey*.

Jesus' acquisition of a ship and a crew in Mark 1:16–20 resembles a passage in *Odyssey* 2. Telemachus, Odysseus's son, needed a ship and companions in order to sail to the mainland to learn his father's whereabouts. The youth went to the shore of the sea and prayed for help from Athena, who immediately came to him,

disguised as Mentor, offering to mentor him around the mainland. She/he told him not to worry about a ship or a crew: "I, going through the town, will quickly gather a crew of volunteers. And ships there are in abundance in seagirt Ithaca, both new and old; of these I will choose out for you the one that is best, and quickly will we make her ready and launch her on the broad deep."[3]

Mark's Jesus had a problem similar to that of Telemachus. When he arrived in Galilee, he had no ship or companions, and he himself was no sailor. Thus, his first act was to call four fishermen to follow him. The following columns compare Homer's episode of Athena's acquiring a crew and ship for Telemachus and Mark's episode of Jesus calling the disciples.

| *Odyssey* 2.383–87 | Mark 1:16–20 |
|---|---|
| In the likeness of Telemachus *she* [Athena] | As *Jesus* |
| *went everywhere throughout the city,* | *passed along the Sea of Galilee,* he saw |
| and to *each of the men* she drew near | *Simon and his brother Andrew* casting |
| | a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. |
| *and spoke her word,* | *And Jesus said to them,* |
| bidding them gather at evening | "Follow me and I will make you |
| beside the swift ship. | fish for people."[4] |
| [Those summoned all followed Athena | And immediately they left their nets |
| to the ship.] | and followed him. |
| Then, | As he went a little further, |
| of *Noemon,* the glorious *son of Phronius,* | he saw *James, the son of Zebedee,* |
| | and his brother John, who were in their |
| she asked a swift *ship,* | *boat* mending the nets. |
| | Immediately he called them; |
| *and he* promised it to her with a ready | *and they* left their father Zebedee in |
| heart. [The men joined her at the ship.][5] | the *boat* with the hired men, and |
| | followed him. |

Both columns narrate twofold calls. In the first calls, Telemachus/Athena walking through the city and Jesus walking along the shore ask strangers to follow them. According to Homer, the crew agreed to the trip because they empathized with Telemachus's desperate plight. The motivation of the four fishermen in Mark is altogether unconvincing: they left everything behind when a perfect stranger invited them to fish for people. Luke recognized the weak motivation and improved Mark by having Jesus perform a sign of his power, a miraculous catch of fish, which so impressed Peter, James, and John that when Jesus mentioned catching people, "they left everything and followed him."[6]

The second calls in both columns mention ships. Telemachus/Athena asked for a ship from Noemon, so that it would be ready for Telemachus when he needed it later. Mark does not state explicitly that Zebedee's boat would be available to Jesus, but later in the narrative Jesus presumed that the disciples would have no trouble acquiring a vessel: "He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him."[7]

Prior to Mark's composition of this pericope, no one seems to have referred to the lake in the central Levant as "the Sea of Galilee."[8] Josephus usually called Mark's "Sea of Galilee" the Gennesar, a clumsy Greek transliteration of כנרת, "Chinnereth."[9] Luke, who knew a real sea when he saw one, consistently demoted Mark's θάλασσα to a mere λίμνη, "lake."[10]

But Mark portrays this lake, only seven miles long and four wide, as a ferocious sea, troubled by storms, mighty winds, and lofty waves. Such gales are possible on the Chinnereth, but historical realism reveals less about Mark's "sea" than its literary potential, which did not escape the attention of a third-century pagan intellectual named Porphyry.

> Experts in the truth about those places [in Galilee] report that there is no sea there, though they do refer to a small, river-fed lake at the foot of the mountain in Galilee near the city Tiberias, a lake easily traversed in small canoes in no more than two hours and insufficiently capacious for waves or storms. So Mark greatly exaggerates the truth when he ludicrously composes this fiction of a nine-hour journey and Jesus striding upon [the water] on the tenth [i.e., "the fourth watch of the night"] to find his disciples sailing on the pond [λάκκῳ] [Mark 6:45–52]. Then he calls it θάλασσα, not merely a sea but one beset by storms, dreadfully wild, and terrifyingly agitated by the heaving of the waves, so that from these details he could represent Christ as performing a great sign, namely, calming a mighty and violent storm and rescuing his scarcely endangered disciples from the deep and the open sea.[11]

This final phrase, "from the deep and the open sea," imitates epic poetry, suggesting that Porphyry accused Mark of expanding the "pond" of Galilee into a mighty "sea" in order to portray Jesus in epic proportions.[12] Porphyry was right: Mark did, as one can see in the first voyage he narrated.

"Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a large crowd gathered around him that he boarded a boat and sat on the sea, while the whole crowd was at the sea on land."[13] This unusual floating podium causes problems in Mark's story; verse 10 reads: "When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables." It is not at all clear how Jesus could have conducted this esoteric session with the Twelve and several others while he was floating on the sea. The earliest evangelist himself apparently created the problem of placing Jesus on a boat, presumably to demonstrate Jesus' popularity with the

crowds. But Mark also may have done so to provide the reader an Odyssean flag, as we shall see.

After the sermon, "when evening had come," Jesus told the Twelve,

> "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"[14]

Scholars usually link Jesus' control of the wind and sea to God's powers in Jewish scriptures and traditions.[15] Furthermore, Mark's story shares several tantalizing characteristics with Jonah in the Septuagint, though the differences between the two stories make it unlikely that the evangelist generated his account exclusively from that model.[16] Jonah was disobedient; Jesus was, well, Jesus. In Jonah God aroused the storm, but in Mark the storm was a hostile, even diabolic power. Jonah slept on board in an apparent attempt to deny his responsibility for the storm, while Jesus slept because he was confident of his powers over the elements. Jonah calmed the storm only by becoming jetsam; Jesus calmed the storm with a word. Someone greater than Jonah was there, and some literary model other than Jonah was there as well.

Furthermore, attributing Mark's story solely to the influence of Jonah fails to account for two peculiarities. First, in no other passage in the gospels does Jesus travel with a convoy, as he does here: "[O]ther boats were with him." These vessels play no role in the rest of the story, and Matthew and Luke, independently recognizing the superfluity of ships, reduced Jesus' convoy to a single vessel.[17] Second, Jesus faults the disciples for their lack of faith, even though they seem to have done nothing amiss. A storm arose, the boat foundered, and they woke Jesus because they believed he could help them. Their question, "[D]o you not care that we are perishing?" expects a positive answer; they assumed that Jesus cared for them and would have wanted to know of the danger they were in. What else could they have done? Let Jesus sleep while the storm sank the ship? Both peculiarities have a Homeric explanation: Mark imitated the story of Aeolus's bag of winds.

Odysseus sailed with a flotilla of twelve ships to the floating island of Aeolus, the god of winds, and regaled him with tales of the Trojan War and the nostoi of the Achaeans. In gratitude, Aeolus sent him off with a bag of winds to assist the

voyage. Because of favorable winds, Odysseus had no need to open it. At night on the tenth day they spotted Ithaca from the fires on shore, and at last Odysseus felt he could sleep. Compare this with Jesus' sleeping on board.

| *Odyssey* 9.563–64 and 10.31 | Mark 4:1, 36, and 38a |
|---|---|
| So *they went on board* quickly | *[H]e boarded* a boat [εἰς πλοῖον |
| [εἴσβαινον] *and sat down* [καθῖζον] | ἐμβάντα] *and sat* [καθῆσθαι] |
| upon the benches, *and sitting* well in order | on *the sea.* |
| struck *the* gray *sea* with their oars. | |
| [For a month Odysseus told Aeolus his | [Jesus spoke his parables to the crowd |
| tales while floating on an island.] | while floating on a boat.] |
| But when I . . . asked him that I might | [W]hen evening had come, he said to them, |
| depart and *requested that he send me* | "*Let us go* across to the other side." |
| *on may way, he,* too, denied me nothing, | And leaving the crowd behind, *they took him* |
| but *gave me conveyance.* | with them, since he was already in the boat. |
| [Odysseus sailed off with twelve ships. | Other boats were with him. . . . |
| After ten days at sea and at night,] | |
| "*an enticing sleep came on me.*" | |
| [Cf. 13.73–80, where Odysseus slept | *He himself was* in the stern [πρύμνῃ] |
| at the stern (πρυμνῆς) on rugs."[18] | *sleeping* on a cushion. |

While Odysseus slept, his comrades questioned each other about the mysterious bag, suspecting that the hero was hiding treasure from them. Overcome by greedy paranoia, they opened the sack and unleashed a ferocious storm. Similarly, as Jesus slept, a storm arose that would demonstrate the disciples' shortcomings.

| *Odyssey* 10.47–49 | Mark 4:37 |
|---|---|
| They opened the bag and all the *winds* | A great gale of *wind* [ἀνέμου] |
| [ἄνεμοι] *rushed out,* and swiftly the | *arose,* and waves beat into the boat, |
| *storm wind* seized them and bore them | so that the boat was already being swamped. |
| weeping out to sea. | |

Mark describes the storm with Homeric nautical vocabulary: "A great gale of wind [λαῖλαψ μεγάλη ἀνέμου] arose, and waves [κύματα] beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped." The New Testament uses the word λαῖλαψ, "gale," of the sea only here and in its Lucan parallel, and the Septuagint relates it to the sea only twice, never in a narrative.[19] But in the *Odyssey,* λαῖλαψ occurs six times, always about the sea and always in narratives, as here in Mark.[20] This vocabulary was typical not only of Homer but of literary storms generally, so it indicates nothing conclusive concerning its origin.

Less common is the motif of awaking from sleep in the middle of a storm. Odysseus awoke helpless to do anything; Jesus awoke and stilled the storm.

| *Odyssey* 10.49–52 (Fagles 55–57) | Mark 4:38b–39 |
| --- | --- |
| [Cf. 10.27, where Odysseus laments, "*[W]e were lost* (ἀπωλόμεθ') through our own folly."] | [T]hey woke [ἐγείρουσιν] him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that *we are lost* [ἀπολλύμεθα]?" |
| "[A]nd *I woke up* [ἐγρόμενος], | *He woke up* [διεγερθείς] and rebuked the |
| and with a start, my spirit churning— / | wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" |
| should I leap over the side and drown | Then the wind ceased and there was |
| at once / or grin and bear it, | great calm [γαλήνη]. |
| stay among the living." | |

The word γαλήνη, "calm," appears only here and in the parallels in Matthew and Luke in all the New Testament; it never appears in the Septuagint. It occurs five times in the *Odyssey,* and in contexts similar to Mark. While Odysseus sailed from Calypso's island, Athena "checked the paths of the . . . winds" except for the Zephyr, and later it too fell off: "[T]he wind ceased [ἄνεμος . . . ἐπαύσατο], and there was a windless calm (γαλήνη)."[21] In Book 12 one reads: "[T]he wind ceased [ἄνεμος . . . ἐπαύσατο] and there was a windless calm [γαλήνη], and a god lulled the waves to sleep."[22] Mark wrote: "[T]he wind ceased [ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος], and there was great calm [γαλήνη]."

Homer contrasted wise Odysseus with his foolish crew, who had caused the storm by their greed. Similarly, Mark contrasted Jesus with the disciples, but the evangelist had no bag of winds for making the Twelve responsible for the storm. Instead, he made the storm arise on its own and blamed the disciples for their fearful response to it. Unlike Jesus, who slept through the gale because he knew he could calm the sea whenever he wished, the disciples panicked and prematurely disturbed his nap. Odysseus's criticism of his crew was altogether apt: they had caused the storm. Mark, on the other hand, strained to fault the Twelve.[23]

Mark seems to have altered Homer's adventure story into a rescue miracle by attributing to Jesus traits not of a hero but of a deity, like Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, the Dioscuri, or Aeolus. Had the disciples read their Homer, they would have known how to answer their own question: "Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" Jesus was not like Odysseus but like Aeolus, "for Zeus had made that king the master of all the winds, / with power to calm them down or rouse them as he pleased."[24]

The application of our six criteria suggests that Mark consciously imitated the epic. The story of Aeolus's bag of winds surely was accessible to Mark insofar as it appears in Odysseus's nostos, the most famous section of the epic. Aeolus was a cliché.[25]

Furthermore, Mark's imitation had many ancient analogs. Aeolus was the target of ancient tragedies and comedies, though only titles survive; Euripides, Antiphanes, Lycyphron, and Eriphus each wrote an *Aeolus*. Homer's tale also was the subject of Greek dramatic dancing.[26] Aeolus's authority over the weather was legendary.[27] As one might expect, Aeolus makes frequent appearances in literary storms, as in Apollonius's *Argonautica,* Vergil's *Aeneid,* Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Quintus Smyrnaeus's *Posthomerica,* and Nonnus's *Dionysiaca.*

Two emulations are particularly relevant to the Calming of the Storm. In his ironically titled *True Story,* Lucian ridiculed Homer's depiction of Aeolia as a floating island. Aeolocentaur is an admiral of hundreds of floating islands, veritable triremes: men row with cypress trees on each side of the islands, pilots steer with enormous rudders, and trees serve as sails. Aeolocentaur's ships defeat a similar armada of floating islands, sinking 150 of them, while he loses 80 of his own.[28]

Vergil used Aeolus's powers to create the storm that Juno sent against the armada of Aeneas at the outset of the *Aeneid.* But to calm the storm the poet had Neptune oppose him. Aeolus's authority, claimed the god of the sea, did not apply to his realm; if Aeolus would rule the winds, let him do so in his cave. With that, Neptune "calms the swollen seas, putting to flight the gathered clouds, and bringing back the sun."[29]

The similarities between Mark and Homer also are dense and sequential.

| *Odyssey* 10.1–69 | Mark 4:35–41 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus's crew boarded and sat down. | Jesus boarded and sat down to teach. |
| On a floating island Odysseus told stories to Aeolus. | On a floating boat Jesus told his stories to the crowds. |
| After a month he took his leave, boarded, and sailed with twelve ships. | When it was late, he took his leave, and sailed. "Other boats were with him." |
| Odysseus slept. | Jesus slept. |
| The greedy crew opened the sack of winds and created a storm: "[A]ll the winds [ἄνεμοι] rushed out." | A storm arose: "[A]nd there was a great gale of wind [ἀνέμου]." |
| The crew groaned. | The disciples were helpless and afraid. |
| Odysseus awoke (ἐγρόμενος) and gave up hope. | Jesus awoke (διεγερθείς; cf. ἐγείρουσιν) and stilled the storm. |
| Odysseus complained of his crew's folly. | Jesus rebuked his disciples for lack of faith. |
| Aeolus was master of the winds. | Jesus was master of winds and sea. |

Mark's voyage also meets the criterion of distinctiveness. Many details in the story can be found in literary gales elsewhere, but some details are exceedingly rare. Of the hundreds of voyages in ancient literature, few involve a protagonist

waking during a storm and rebuking culpable companions. Furthermore, the earliest evangelist provided distinctive flags to alert his readers to the presence of his model. Like Odysseus, who told stories to Aeolus while floating on an island, Jesus told his stories floating on a boat. Only in this voyage among all the gospels does Jesus sail "with other ships," a detail that points to Odysseus's twelve ships. Mark ends his tale with the disciples asking themselves who Jesus was, "that even the winds and the sea obey him." He is like Aeolus, the king of winds.

These flags encourage the reader to interpret the calming of the sea in light of Aeolus. Mark emulated Homer by making his hero superior. When the storm arose in the epic, Odysseus was helpless; all he could do was to hold on for dear life until the storm passed. Aeolus interpreted this catastrophe as proof the hero was cursed by the gods. Jesus, on the other hand, rebuked the winds and calmed the sea, thus playing a role that Homer gave only to gods like Aeolus. Surely someone greater than Odysseus is here.

# 8

## *Speluncular Savages*

Immediately following the stilling of the storm, Jesus' boat arrives at "the other side" where he meets the Gerasene demoniac. Typically told, an exorcism brings the exorcist and the demoniac (or an agent for the demoniac) into contact and then lets the exorcist and the reader learn of the victim's condition, such as deafness, convulsions, antisocial behavior, or preternatural cognitive powers, as in Mark 1:24: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." The exorcist then rebukes the demon or demons and demands departure (the *apopompe*). Often the exorcist sends the spirit or spirits into the wilderness, the earth, the sea, or a living host (the *epipompe*). The demon may dramatize its exit by producing violent effects, and the crowd, amazed, acknowledges the exorcist's powers.[1]

Each of these elements appears in Mark 5:1–20. Jesus meets a demoniac whose violence the narrator describes in detail. The victim recognizes Jesus and his powers and asks for mercy: "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." Predictably, Jesus expels the resident demons, who in turn demonstrate their departure by entering swine and rushing into the sea, where they all drown. The local citizens see the demoniac "sitting there, clothed, and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion [of demons]; and they were afraid."

Even though much of Mark's account conforms to the typical exorcism, most

of it is so atypical that scholars have considered it an anomaly, even a divergent genre.[2] In the first place, of the exorcisms in the New Testament, only this and its parallels in Matthew and Luke begin with a voyage. Second, no exorcism in the New Testament contains a more graphic description of a demoniac's antisocial behavior. He was unrestrainable and a threat to civilized society. Third, Jesus' order that the demons come out of the man at first had no apparent effect. They departed only after negotiating more favorable terms. Fourth, when Jesus asked the demon his name—the only request for a demon's name in the New Testament—he replied, "My name is Legion." The demon obviously did not give his given name but a sobriquet representing the multitude of inhabiting demons. Fifth, even though Jesus' allowing the demons to possess other hosts finds analogies in other ancient exorcisms, Mark's selection of a huge herd of grazing pigs and their drowning is unique. Sixth, no other exorcism contains an extended epilogue involving the local townsfolk, who, despite the newly won sanity of the outcast, detest the exorcist and force him to leave. Spectators of exorcisms usually celebrate. Seventh, exorcisms typically do not contain requests of demoniacs to follow the exorcist. Jesus uncharacteristically refused to take the demoniac along with him; instead, he told the man to go home and announce what "the Lord" had done for him, even though such an announcement would seem to breech Jesus' wall of secrecy. Eighth, this is the only exorcism in the New Testament that ends with a voyage.

These deviations from the garden-variety exorcism demand some explanation, and the explanations are legion. Some interpreters insist that these anomalies point to personal reminiscences of a historical event, others contend that the origin of the story had to do with a popular folktale or legend of another exorcist, and others suggest that a dramatic event later became embellished with legendary and novelistic elements and have proposed complex histories of transmission.[3] Scholars frequently argue that the story as we now have it expresses in narrative the concerns of Isaiah 65 according to the Septuagint. In support of this position is Rom. 10:20–21, where Paul quotes from the beginning of this chapter in the context of legitimizing his mission to the Gentiles.[4] Even if Isaiah 65 influenced Mark's choice of vocabulary and a Gentile setting, this influence can account for only one of the deviations from the typical exorcism identified earlier, namely, the selection of a herd of swine to host the demons. In this chapter I will argue that every deviation from the standard exorcism derived from Mark's imitation of Homer.

If one were looking for a Homeric model, one might begin with Circe the witch, who turned Odysseus's soldiers into swine. Odysseus and his crew sailed to her island and disembarked, just as Jesus and the Twelve sailed to the land of the Gerasenes and disembarked. At the end of each story, the hero and crew sail

to other adventures. Odysseus sent twenty-three of his crew to investigate the source of smoke in the distance. They discovered Circe's home and devoured her porcine-producing drug, except for Eurylochus, who escaped to report the tragedy to Odysseus. Armed by the root *moly,* supplied by Hermes, the hero was unaffected by the drug and drew his sword to persuade the witch to transform the swine back to soldiers. Her reply resembles the response of the demoniac to Jesus.

| *Odyssey* 10.343–25 and 330–33 | Mark 5:6–8 |
|---|---|
| But *she,* with a *loud cry* [μέγα ἰάχουσα], | When he saw Jesus from a distance, |
| *ran* beneath [ὑπέδραμε], | *he ran* [ἔδραμεν] |
| *and clasped my knees, and* beseeching me | *and knelt before him; and* |
| *with wailing addressed me* with | *crying with a loud voice* [φωνῇ μεγάλῃ] |
| winged words: "*Who* [τίς] *are you* | *said, "What* [τί] *have you* to do with me, |
| among men, and from where? . . . | *Jesus,* |
| Surely you are *Odysseus, the man of* | *Son of the Most High God?* |
| *many devices,* who Argeiphontes of the | |
| golden wand always said to me would | |
| come here on his way home from Troy | |
| with his swift, black ship. No, come, | I adjure you by God, *do not torment me.*" |
| *put up your sword in its sheath.* | For he had said to him, "Come out of |
| | the man, you unclean spirit!" |

In both columns the opponent runs (ὑπέδραμε / ἔδραμεν) to the hero, falls before him, in a loud voice asks him a question in supplication, and identifies him by name with an appropriate predicate. Circe knows the stranger to be Odysseus thanks to a prophecy from Hermes; the demoniac knows the stranger to be Jesus thanks to the supernatural perception of the inhabiting demons. Circe asks Odysseus to sheath his sword; the Gerasene asks Jesus not to harm him. Mark's borrowing from Homer may explain why Jesus' first attempt to exorcise was anachronistic and ineffective. The demon requested Jesus not to harm him prior to the reader's learning that Jesus had commanded the demons to leave. A more chronological presentation would locate Jesus' apopompe, or ordering the demon to depart, before the demon's appeal for mercy. Matthew avoided Mark's difficulty simply by omitting Jesus' ineffective and anachronistic command.[5]

The parallel in the epic, on the other hand, makes perfect sense. Circe knew Odysseus meant her harm: he had drawn his sword and rushed at her. The evangelist seems to have mimicked Circe's question of Odysseus's identity followed by a request not to harm but then recognized that the demoniac had insufficient reason to suspect Jesus might torment him. So Mark backtracked and wrote that Jesus already had told the demon, "Come out of the man."

To this point Jesus has played a role similar to Odysseus's, but later he resembles Circe and the demoniac resembles Odysseus. For example, Circe invited Odysseus to join her in bed, but he first adjured her not to harm him: " '[S]wear a mighty oath [ὅρκον] that you will not plot against me any fresh mischief to my hurt.' So I spoke, and she at once swore the oath to do me no harm, as I bade her. But when she had sworn, and made an end of the oath [ὅρκον], then I went up to the beautiful bed of Circe."[6] In Mark it is the demoniac who requires an oath: "I adjure you [ὁρκίζω] by God, do not torment me." Circe turned the swine back into soldiers, though later they would all fall into the sea and drown. Jesus sent the legion of demons into swine and then drowned them in the Sea of Galilee.

If Mark modeled his story after Homer's Circe, it might account for several peculiarities, such as Jesus' sailing to and from the site, the selection of swine as the new hosts for the demons, and their designation as Legion: Odysseus's companions were soldiers. It also would explain the ineffectiveness of the initial exorcism: Mark used it to explain why the demoniac asked for mercy.

There can be little doubt that the story of Circe was available to Mark; it was an ancient hit, as one can see from texts and art. Furthermore, the tale had many literary imitators, analogies to Mark. Apollonius Rhodius sent Medea and Jason to Circe for expiation. When they disembarked they saw men whom she had turned into various types of beasts.[7] Vergil sent Aeneas's armada safely past Circe's island and its resident theriomorphs.[8] Ovid depicted her island full of such monstrosities and had her turn yet another character into a beast.[9] Petronius named one of his characters Circe, who, predictably, had a voracious sexual appetite and magical powers.[10] Lucian parodied Homer's Circe in his so-called *True Story,* and Apuleius made Circe his model for the witch Meroe, whose magic turned people into animals.[11] According to the *Acts of Andrew,* cannibals captured Matthias, gouged out his eyes, gave him drugs to make his mind like that of a beast, and gave him fodder to eat for thirty days of fattening before they ate him. Like Odysseus, Andrew rescued his comrade and others from this predicament and then sailed away. The author clearly modeled his account after the story of Circe and used it to fend off pagan criticisms of Christians as cannibals.[12]

The parallels between Homer and Mark also are dense and sequential.

| *Odyssey* 10 | Mark 5:1–20 |
| --- | --- |
| Odysseus and crew sailed to Aeaea, | Jesus and disciples sailed to the region of the Gerasenes. |
| and Circe turned his soldiers into swine. | |
| When Odysseus drew his sword against her, the ogre ran to him, knelt, called him by name, and begged for mercy. | When Jesus ordered the demon to depart, the demoniac ran to him, knelt, called him by name, and begged for mercy. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Odysseus required Circe to swear an oath that she would not harm him. | He asked Jesus to swear that he would not harm him. |
| Odysseus asked Circe to turn the swine back into soldiers, and she consented, but later they would drown in the sea. | The legion of demons asked to be sent into swine, and Jesus consented, but he then sent all two thousand into the sea and drowned them. |
| Odysseus and his crew sailed away. | Jesus and his disciples sailed away. |

Several of these parallels are distinctive: the recognition of the stranger by name, the swearing of an oath to do no harm, and especially the turning of soldiers into swine, soldiers who later would drown in the sea. Furthermore, Mark's emulation of the story makes the parallels interpretable. Circe used her powers to dehumanize twenty-two of Odysseus's crew, perhaps to eat them. Jesus, however, used his powers to cure the demoniac and to rid the area of some two thousand demons and unclean swine.

Even closer parallels with the demoniac, however, appear in the story of Polyphemus. Like the story of Circe, that of Polyphemus was a permanent fixture of ancient culture. Greek art gives testimony to his popularity, and no version of his story was more famous than Homer's *Cyclopeia* (*Odyssey* 9).[13] Not only was the story accessible to Mark, his imitation had many analogies. Epicharmus parodied it in his *Cyclopes,* Cratinus burlesqued it in his *Odysseus,* Aristophanes alluded to it in his *Wasps,* Euripides transvalued it in his *Cyclops,* Ovid recast it in the *Metamorphoses,* and Vergil used it to develop three separate characters: Polyphemus himself, Cacus, and Mezentius.[14] Each author took delight in competing with Homer's description of Polyphemus's strength, barbarism, and antisocial diet. Apollonius modeled four passages in the *Argonautica* after Polyphemus, most obviously the giant Talos.[15] Thucydides and Apuleius, too, imitated the *Cyclopeia*.[16] Post-Homeric tradition claimed that despite his savage appearance and habits, the Cyclops won the love of the nymph Galatea, a popular topic for literary jest.[17] So well known was Homer's account that even Latin authors could echo it fully confident that their readers would catch the allusion.[18] Mark, eager to depict the Gerasene as a savage challenge to Jesus' powers, seems to have imitated Homer's depiction of this paradigmatic primitive. The *Cyclopeia* suggests solutions to many of the peculiarities identified at the outset.

### *Sailing to the Location*

Homer states that Odysseus's convoy of twelve ships sailed to the archipelago of the Cyclopes. Mark's Jesus sailed with several boats to "the country of the Gerasenes," that is, into predominantly Gentile territory.

| *Odyssey* 9.101 and 103–7 | Mark 4:1b and 35–36 and 5:1 |
|---|---|
| *I bade the rest of my trusty comrades to embark* [ἐπιβαινέμεν] with speed on the swift ships. . . . So they *went on board* [εἴσβαινον] straightway *and sat down* [καθῖζον] upon the benches, *and sitting* well in order smote the gray sea with their oars. | [H]e *got into a boat* [εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα] on the sea *and sat* [καθῆσθαι] there. . . . *[H]e said to them, "Let us go to the other side."* And leaving the crowd behind, they took him in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. . . . |
| [Odysseus traveled with twelve boats.] Thence *we sailed on,* grieved at heart, and we came *to the land of the Cyclopes* [Κυκλώπων δ' ἐς γαῖαν]. | *They came* to the other side of the sea, *to the country of the Gerasenes* [εἰς τὴν χώραν Γερασηνῶν]. |

Both Odysseus and Jesus disembarked.

| *Odyssey* 9.149–50 | Mark 5:2a |
|---|---|
| *And when we* had beached the ships we lowered all the sails and ourselves *disembarked* [ἐκ . . . βῆμεν]. | *And when he* had *stepped out of* [ἐξελθόντες] the boat . . . |

Taken in isolation, these similarities require no literary dependence whatsoever, insofar as they instantiate a stock pattern in sailing stories. Their significance lies in the common placement just before encounters with cavemen.

## *Mighty Men Who Live in Caves*

Homer depicts the Cyclopes as barbaric shepherds in a primitive fantasy land where "wild goats innumerable" run free. They are "insolent and lawless," know nothing of husbandry, commerce, or shipbuilding, "dwell on the peaks of mountains in hollow caves," and not only flaunt the conventions of ancient hospitality but enjoy eating strangers along with their cheese and muttonchops.[19] Polyphemus himself was a giant "clothed in tremendous strength, a savage man that knew nothing of rights or law," who could lift a stone that "no twenty-two wagons, rugged and four-wheeled, / could budge . . . off the ground."[20] He, like the rest of his tribe, lived in a huge cave, and was not above cannibalism.

> Lurching up, he lunged out with his hands toward my men
> and snatching two at once, rapping them on the ground,
> he knocked them dead like pups—
> their brains gushed out all over, soaked the floor—

and ripping them limb from limb to fix his meal
he bolted them down like a mountain-lion, left no scrap,
devoured entrails, flesh and bones, marrow and all![21]

Mark's description of the Gerasene demoniac cannot compete with Homer's ghastly details, but like Polyphemus, this man lived in the mountains among the caves, knew no law, and possessed incredible strength. Homer and Mark even introduced their monsters similarly. Homer: "There [in the cave] a monstrous man spent his nights, who shepherded his flocks alone and afar, and did not mingle with others, but lived apart, obedient to no law."[22] When Mark introduces the demoniac, he manages to mention three times that he lived in "the tombs," presumably tombs made from caves, as in 15:46 and 16:2–3. "[A] man *out of the tombs* with an unclean spirit met him. He lived *among the tombs;* and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day *among the tombs* and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones."[23] When the demoniac saw Jesus, he recognized him, ran to him, and begged for mercy, much as Circe had asked for mercy from Odysseus, as we have seen.

## *The Request for a Name and the Demon's Response*

Mark's inspiration for the naming of the demon may owe less to the typical exorcism than to Odysseus's famous ruse of calling himself Nobody. Immediately preceding the left-hand column, Odysseus had inebriated Polyphemus with potent wine. Polyphemus wanted more:

| *Odyssey* 9:354–56 and 363–66 | Mark 5:9 |
|---|---|
| *[He] asked me* for it again a second time: | *Then Jesus asked him,* |
| "Give me it again with a ready heart, and | |
| *tell me your name* [μοι τεὸν οὔνομα εἰπέ]. | "*What is your name* [τί ὄνομά σοι]?" |
| . . ." *I spoke* to him . . . : | *He replied,* |
| "*Nobody is my name* | "*Legion is my name* |
| [Οὖτις ἐμοί ἡ ὄνομα]." | [λεγιὼν ὄνομά μοι]; for we are many." |

Neither Odysseus nor the demoniac gave his true name. Odysseus's pseudonym indicates nonexistence; the demoniac's a plethora of existences.[24] Both responses omit the verb and use the words ὄνομα, "name," and μοι or ἐμοί, "my." In both stories the exchange of names gives the hero power over the monster, though in radically different ways. By naming himself Nobody, Odysseus outwitted

the giant, who then could not ask for help from his friends, for Nobody was harming him. Jesus, on the other hand, gained power over the demons by learning their name.

Odysseus and Jesus usually play similar roles, but in these instances of naming, the part of Odysseus falls to the demoniac. This is a significant transformation, but one can understand why Mark reversed the roles. The demons in Mark already knew Jesus' identity, as in 1:24; thus, when the demoniac approached Jesus, he correctly named him: "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." A request for Jesus' name would have been ludicrous. Furthermore, for this section Mark seems to have borrowed from the story of Circe, who recognized the stranger by name because Hermes had predicted his coming.

### *The Running Swine*

The passages that follow the naming of Nobody and Legion narrate how the heroes subdued the monsters. Odysseus blinded Polyphemus's one eye, and, when the giant rolled the stone from the mouth of the cave to let out his sheep, the hero and his crew held on to their undersides and thus avoided the giant's searching hands. Jesus, on the other hand, exorcised the Legion and sent them into two thousand swine. Mark's choice of animals as the demons' new but temporary dwellings is unusual and suggests an imitation of the Circe story.

The islands of the Cyclopes were home to "wild goats innumerable" who "course over the peaks of the mountains [ὀρέων]." "[U]nsown and untilled all the days it [the land] is bereft of mankind, but feeds [βόσκει] the bleating goats."[25] Mark's landscape, too, was pasture to an enormous population of animals, not goats but pigs: "[T]here on the mountain [ὄρει] a great herd of swine was feeding [βοσκομένη]."[26] The Homeric parallel may explain the improbability of Mark's setting. Myriad wild goats feeding on the mountains of a mythical island tax one's credulity less than a single herd of two thousand pigs feeding in open lands on the mountains of the Decapolis.[27] One might well agree with Porphyry: "What a fiction! What nonsense! What a downright folly! A throng of two thousand swine ran into the sea and died by drowning!"[28]

### *The Responses of the Local Residents*

A standard feature of early ancient miracle stories, including exorcisms, is the validation of the miracle by bystanders. Typically, those who witness the event express their favorable responses. This is not the case with those who witnessed the flight of the swine or those who came to the scene to see what had happened: they asked Jesus to leave. Mark's narration of their response is unusual

and awkward. In verse 14 the narrator says that the "swineherds ran off and told it [the drowning of the swine] in the city and in the country," but in verse 16 the same audience again hears the same information: "Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it." Even though one can harmonize verses 14 and 16, the second report clearly is redundant, and Matthew's version reads quite acceptably without a parallel to it.[29]

The presence of the double report might be due to a similar passage in the *Odyssey*. After Odysseus blinded his eye, Polyphemus called out to his neighbors, thus involving other shepherds in his plight. The giant twice indicated that all was not well in the cave.

| *Odyssey* 9.399–408 | Mark 5:14–16 |
| --- | --- |
| [H]e *shouted* to the Cyclopes, who dwelt round about him *in caves among the windy heights,* and *they* heard his cry and *came thronging* from every side, and standing around the cave asked him *what ailed him.*. . . . Then from inside the cave *the strong Polyphemus answered* them: "My friends, it is Nobody that is slaying me." | The swineherds ran off and *told it in the city and in the country.*<br><br>Then people *came* to see *what it was that had happened.*. . . .<br><br>*Those who had seen what had happened* to the demoniac and to the swine *reported it.* |

In both texts neighbors hostile to the hero came to the site to learn what had happened to the monster and animals.[30] The gigantic shepherd called to his neighbors for help, and they gathered about the mouth of the cave, unable to see what had happened on the other side of the massive stone that blocked the entrance. They had to ask the giant what was going on, and he told them. In Mark, the swineherds called for help "in the city and in the country," and the locals arrived to see what had happened, but they, unlike the Cyclopes, could see the man's condition for themselves. They "saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind." The evangelist easily could have omitted the repetition of the swineherds' report in the following verse, but his apparent reliance on Polyphemus's famous line about Nobody made Mark nod.

Mark's description of the exorcised demoniac as "clothed" requires the reader to assume that the demoniac previously had been naked, even though the evangelist had said nothing earlier about it. Ancient artists depicted Polyphemus nude, not merely because most mythological males were at least partially nude, but also because, according to Homer, the Cyclopes had no crafts and ate only what the earth and their animals naturally provided them.[31] They were, after all, troglodytes.

### *The Rejected Request of the Monster*

After Odysseus escaped Polyphemus, and after Jesus exorcised Legion, both reembarked with their associates. Both tales include a final verbal exchange between the hero, now aboard ship, and his subdued foe. In the *Odyssey*, Polyphemus called out to Odysseus, inviting him to come back to receive gifts; Odysseus and the reader know that Polyphemus wished to destroy the hero. In Mark, the demoniac asked to go with Jesus.[32] Odysseus then taunted Polyphemus, telling him to announce to others that it was he, Odysseus, who had blinded his eye. Jesus told the demoniac to return home to announce what Jesus had done for him.

| *Odyssey* 9.501–5 (Fagles 558–62) | Mark 5:19 |
|---|---|
| *I called back* with another burst of anger, | *[A]nd [Jesus] said to him,* |
| "Cyclops — if any man on the face of the earth should ask you who blinded you, | "Go home to your friends, |
| shamed you so — *say Odysseus,* | *and tell them how much the Lord* |
| raider of cities, | *has done for you, and what mercy* |
| *he gouged out your eye,* Laertes' son." | *he has shown you.*" |

In this instance Jesus does not silence the erstwhile demoniac, as he does many others whom he heals or exorcises, but tells him to announce what he had done for him. Neither Odysseus nor Jesus used the first-person-singular pronoun "I," but a self-referential substitute: "say Odysseus . . . gouged out your eye"; "tell them how much the Lord has done." Mark seems to have followed Homer's lead, though with an important twist. Whereas Odysseus told the giant to proclaim that he had harmed him, Jesus told the erstwhile demoniac to proclaim that he had healed him.

### *The Voyage after the Exorcism*

Both stories end with the hero and associates sailing off to new adventures. The voyage that follows in the epic was the topic of the last chapter: Odysseus's sleeping aboard ship while his crew unleashed the bag of Aeolus's winds. Immediately *before* the story of the Gerasene demoniac, one finds Mark's imitation of the Aeolus episode: Jesus' awaking at sea to calm the storm. In other words, both the *Odyssey* and Mark contain similar stories immediately juxtaposed, though in an inverted order.

The following columns demonstrate the remarkable density and order of parallels between the stories of the Cyclops and the Gerasene. (Items in square brackets occur out of order.)

| *Odyssey* 9.101–565 | Mark 5:1–20 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus and his crew, in a convoy, arrived at the land of the Cyclopes. | Jesus and his disciples, with "other boats," arrived at the land of the Gerasenes. |
| On the mountains "innumerable goats" grazed. | [On the mountains "about two thousand" swine grazed.] |
| Odysseus and crew disembarked. | Jesus and his disciples disembarked. |
| They encountered a savage, lawless giant who lived in a cave. | They encountered a savage, lawless demoniac who lived among the caves. |
| He asked if Odysseus came to harm him. | He asked Jesus not to torment him. |
| The giant asked Odysseus his name. | Jesus asked the demoniac his name. |
| Odysseus answered, "Nobody." | The demoniac answered, "Legion." |
| Odysseus subdued the giant with violence and trickery. [Circe had turned Odysseus's soldiers into swine.] | Jesus subdued the demons with divine power and sent them into the swine and then into the sea. |
| The shepherd called out to his neighbors. | The swineherds called on their neighbors. |
| The Cyclopes came to the site asking about Polyphemus's sheep and goats. | The Gerasenes came to the site to find out about their swine. |
| (Polyphemus usually was depicted nude.) | The demoniac, once naked, now was clothed. |
| Odysseus and crew reembarked. | Jesus and his disciples reembarked. |
| Odysseus told the giant to proclaim that he had blinded him. | [Jesus told the healed demoniac to proclaim that he had healed him.] |
| The giant asked Odysseus, who was now aboard ship, to come back. | The demoniac asked Jesus, now aboard ship, if he could be with him. |
| Odysseus refused the request. | Jesus refused the request. |
| Odysseus and crew sailed away. | Jesus and disciples sailed away. |
| Odysseus awoke during a storm at sea in the episode immediately following the story of the Cyclops. | [Jesus awoke during a storm and calmed the wind and sea just before exorcising the demoniac.] |

Mark's imitation also retains some of the distinctive traits of *Odyssey* 9, insofar as both stories place monsters in caves, grazing animals on the mountains, and neighbors at the scene. In both stories a character asks for a name from someone who responds not with a name but with a significant substitute. Homer's implausible conversation between Polyphemus and Odysseus already aboard ship finds an analogy in the equally unusual conversation between the cured demoniac, on land, and Jesus, on ship. Finally, just as Odysseus told Polyphemus to tell others who it was who blinded him, Jesus tells the Gerasene to tell others who it was who healed him. These details are not run-of-the-mill; their presence in both stories issued from Mark's mimesis. Furthermore, Mark's reliance on the epic would explain many of the peculiarities in Mark's tale, such as sailing to and from

the site, the detailed description of the demoniac, and the hostility of the Gerasenes despite the exorcism of their local nuisance.

Mark not only imitates, he emulates, Odysseus overcame Polyphemus by lying about his name, blinding the giant, and outwitting him. He left the giant far worse off than he found him: blinded and deprived of his sheep. Jesus, on the other hand, used no deceit or violence, only divine power. The victims of violence were demons, not the demoniac, whom Jesus left better off than he found him, "clothed and in his right mind." Polyphemus's bad news — "Say Odysseus, raider of cities, gouged out your eye" — has become good news — "[T]ell . . . how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."

## *Excursus: Rolling Stones*

According to Mark, Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body "in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb."[33] Nothing here seems particularly implausible; indeed, archaeologists have discovered several such cave tombs around Jerusalem. Two with rolling stones over the opening interred those of highest society: a tomb for the Herodian family and another for Queen Helen of Adiabene.[34] Pausanius recorded a legend about the tomb of the queen.[35]

Two difficulties internal to Mark's story, however, suggest that this setting is not so innocent. Joseph himself seems to have rolled the stone against the door, even though "it was very large."[36] But the three women who arrived Easter morning were unable to move it. Of course, Mark may have wanted his reader to assume that Joseph, a dignitary, employed help in moving the stone; even so — and this is the second problem — the women, who had seen "where the body was laid," should have brought help to the tomb. Instead, they arrived wringing their hands and asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" These difficulties may have derived from Mark's use of Homer.

As any reader of the *Odyssey* knows, the Cyclops Polyphemus lived in a cave with a huge rolling stone for a door. Compare the following:

| *Odyssey* 9.240–43 | Mark 15:46 |
| --- | --- |
| Then he [Polyphemus] lifted up and *set in place the great doorstone* [θυρεὸν μέγαν], a mighty rock; two and twenty stout four-wheeled wagons could not lift it from the ground, such a towering mass of *rock* he *set in the doorway* [θύρηισιν]. [Cf. 9.340.] | He [Joseph] then *rolled a stone* [λίθον] *against the door* [θύραν] of the tomb.<br>[Cf. 16.4: "the *stone* (λίθος), which was very *large* (μέγας)."] |

Not being a giant, Joseph could not lift such a stone; he had to roll it. When the women came to the tomb, they had a problem similar to the one faced by Odysseus and his companions. The stones over the entrances of both caves were too massive to move.

| *Odyssey* 9.304–5 | Mark 16:3 |
| --- | --- |
| For we should not have been able to *thrust back* [ἀπώσασθαι] with our hands *from the high door* [θυράων] *the* mighty *stone* [λίθον] which he had set there. | They had been saying to one another, "Who will *roll away* [ἀποκυλίσει] *the stone* [λίθον] for us *from the door* [θύραν] to the tomb?" |

The giant Polyphemus himself, beguiled by Odysseus, removed the stone from the door to his cave; God, Jesus himself, or the mysterious youth did so for the women.

| *Odyssey* 9.416 | Mark 16:4 |
| --- | --- |
| [Polyphemus] *took away the stone* from the door [ἀπὸ . . . λίθον εἶλε], | When they looked up, they saw that *the stone* [λίθος], which was *very large* [μέγας], *had already been rolled back* [ἀποκεκύλισται]. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, *sitting* [καθήμενον] on the right side. |
| and himself *sat* in the doorway [καθέζετο]. [Cf. 9.313: "*moving away the great doorstone* (ἀφελὼν θυρέον μέγαν)."] | |

Both Odysseus and Jesus escaped death in a rocky cave thanks to a superhuman hefting of a huge stone.

Homer emphasized the immensity of the stone that blocked the giant's cave, calling it immovable by twenty-two horse-drawn wagons, "huge," "mighty," and "great [μέγας]."[37] Of the gospels, Mark more than any other emphasizes the size of the stone, calling it "exceedingly great [μέγας]," too large for the three women to move. Matthew states that the rock merely was "great," whereas Luke and John say nothing whatever concerning its size.[38] Furthermore, no other gospel retains the question of the women in Mark, "Who will roll away the stone [λίθον] for us from the door [θύραν] to the tomb?" This question roughly corresponds to Odysseus's realization that he and his comrades were unable to "thrust back . . . from the high door [θυράων] the mighty stone [λίθον]."[39] Mark's account clearly is closest to Homer's description of the great stone door chez Cyclops.

Perhaps it is not accidental that the scribe responsible for the reading of Luke 23:53 in Codex Bezae added, "And when he [Jesus] had been placed in the tomb, they placed against it [ἐπέθηκαν] a stone that scarcely twenty [εἴκοσι] people

could roll." Compare *Odyssey* 9.240–43: "Then he [Polyphemus] lifted up and set in place [ἐπέθηκε] a great door stone, a mighty rock; two and twenty [εἴκοσ'] stout four-wheeled wagons could not lift it from the ground, such a towering mass of rock he set [ἐπέθηκε] in the doorway." The hand responsible for this passage — perhaps Luke's own — seems to have noticed in the stone rolled before the mouth of Jesus' tomb a parallel to the stone before the mouth of Polyphemus's cave.

# 9

## *Femmes Fatales*

The death of John the Baptist is one of Mark's finest narrative accomplishments and has captured the imagination of readers from the first century until now. According to the earliest evangelist, Herod had married the wife of his brother Philip, and John declared himself against the union. The tetrarch arrested John and placed him in prison, but he "feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him."[1] His new wife, Herodias, was not so open-minded; she "had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not" because of Herod's regard for him.

> But an opportunity came [for her] when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom."
>
> She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison,

> brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.[2]

The Jewish historian Josephus also narrated the murder of John the Baptist, and, by comparing the two accounts, one suspects that Mark freely reshaped the facts to serve his literary ends.[3] Josephus depicted Herod as a calculating, ruthless ruler who treated John with contempt. He feared John's eloquence and the seditious potential of his fiery sermons. "Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake."[4] Mark's account, on the other hand, not only exculpates Herod, it inculpates Herodias, his wife, as the murderous mastermind. Whereas Josephus attributed John's death to Herod's *Realpolitik,* Mark attributed it to Herodias's libido and bruised ego.

Some interpreters have attributed Mark's tale to a variant oral tradition of the death of John, while others have attempted to isolate literary influence, especially the opening chapters of Esther and its vigorous interpretation in postbiblical Judaism.[5] Esther probably did influence Mark's narrative, but it is not clear how Esther alone could have generated this account. In several respects, the stories are radically different. For example, in Esther one finds no love triangle between a woman and two husbands. The two women in Mark are villains who secure the death of the Baptist, but their counterparts in Esther, Vashti and especially Esther herself, are heroines. Whereas Esther made noble use of Ahasuerus's offer of half of his kingdom, Herodias and her daughter abused the offer and asked for the head of John. If Mark borrowed from Esther, why did he demonize the women?

Mark's tale shares many characteristics with Greek and Latin novellas that narrate murders at banquets, sometimes birthday parties or victory celebrations, and always hosted by noblemen whose power extends to capital punishment. The banquet provides predictable details for the setting: drinking, dancing, dialogue, and debauchery. Among the guests is someone, often a lover, who wheedles, begs, or tricks the ruler into murdering someone, often at the feast itself. The result is ironically hideous: a feast befouled by human blood; indeed, the punch of such stories derives in part from this disgusting irony. If one were to propose the most likely genre for Mark's tale, it would be just such court novellas.[6]

Several details in Mark's tale suggest also the influence of Homer's account of the murder of Agamemnon. The poet of the *Odyssey* narrates aspects of the story in three different passages, each time as a flashback.[7] The basic tale goes like this. To fight for his brother's honor against the Trojans, Agamemnon had left his wife Clytemnestra in Achaea and ordered a minstrel to guard her against infidelity.

During the king's long absence, Aegisthus, his own cousin, murdered the minstrel and joined Clytemnestra in bed. When Agamemnon at last returned home, he was ignorant of Clytemnestra's adultery. Aegisthus prepared a feast for him and "brought him up all unaware of his doom, and when he had feasted him he slew him, as one slays an ox at the corn crib. And not one of the comrades of the son of Atreus was left, of all that followed him, nor one of the men of Aegisthus, but they were all slain in the halls."[8]

The soul of Agamemnon in Hades told his own tale to Odysseus like this:

> Aegisthus hatched my doom and my destruction,
> *he* killed me, he with my own accursed wife . . .
> he invited me to his palace, sat me down to feast
> then cut me down as a man cuts down some ox at the trough!
> . . . . . .
> You in your day have witnessed hundreds slaughtered,
> killed in single combat or killed in pitched battle, true,
> but if you'd laid eyes on *this* it would have wrenched your heart—
> how we sprawled by the mixing-bowl and loaded tables there,
> throughout the palace, the whole floor awash with blood.
> . . . . . .
> So,
> there's nothing more deadly, bestial than a woman
> set on works like these—what a monstrous thing
> she plotted, slaughtered her own lawful husband![9]

The great feasts of Nestor and Menelaus had set the pattern for heroic hospitality, a pattern brutally violated here. The contrast serves to highlight the outrage of Agamemnon's murder. Agamemnon thus warned Odysseus that if he ever returned safely to Ithaca he must keep his identity a secret.

Several aspects of the murder of Agamemnon find echoes in the murder of John the Baptist. For example, Mark tells the tale as a flashback, the only major violation of sequential chronology in the entire gospel. In both stories brothers or cousins vie for the same woman, and their rivalry ends with a death. Although other characters performed the actual executions in both stories, the adulteresses deserved the greater blame for the murders. Homer emphasized the irony of the murders at a feast, "how we sprawled by the mixing-bowl and loaded tables there."[10] Mark's portrayal is no less ironic: "He [the executioner] went and beheaded him [John] in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother."[11] Quelles fêtes des femmes fatales!

More distinctive, however, is the role of both stories in preparing their readers for later events concerning the protagonists. Homer narrated Agamemnon's murder as an anticipation of the dangers Odysseus would face when he returned

to Ithaca, for he, like the king of Mycenae and Argos, had left behind a wife and son.[12] Whereas Clytemnestra had only one suitor but caved in to his desires and cared nothing about her husband's whereabouts during his nostos, Penelope had to put off the advances of 108 suitors despite her reasonable presumption that her husband had died at sea. When Agamemnon told Odysseus of his woes, he warned the hero not to repeat his mistake of returning openly.[13] Heeding his warning, Odysseus returned to Ithaca in disguise, a ruse all the wiser insofar as his entire crew, unlike Agamemnon's, had perished at sea. Thus Odysseus was able to turn the tables: the suitors did not slay him; he slew them.[14]

Similarly, Mark crafted John's execution as a warning to the reader of what the authorities might do to Jesus once they trapped him into claiming he was the Messiah. Thus Jesus, like Odysseus, attempted to keep his identity a secret when he returned to Jerusalem. Like Herod's role in the death of John, Pilate will reluctantly participate in Jesus' execution, forced into it by the jealousy and self-interest of the Jewish authorities, who, like Herodias against John, had long wanted to kill him and did so at their first opportunity. Pilate, too, will send an executioner to dispatch his prisoner in a gruesome manner, and like John's disciples, Joseph of Arimathea will take up Jesus' corpse and lay it in a tomb.[15]

The parallels between the deaths of Agamemnon and John the Baptist satisfy several of our criteria for mimesis. The parallels are not particularly dense, but they are sequential.

| *Odyssey* | Mark 6:17–29 |
|---|---|
| Homer narrated the story as a flashback. | Mark narrated the story as a flashback. |
| Clytemnestra forsook her husband for her husband's cousin. | Herodias forsook her husband for her husband's brother. |
| Clytemnestra sought to kill Agamemnon, who posed a threat to her affair. | Herodias sought to kill John, who posed a threat to her affair. |
| Aegisthus hosted a banquet and invited the king and his soldiers. | Antipas hosted a banquet and invited dignitaries. |
| Agamemnon was slain amid serving dishes. | John was beheaded, and his head was brought in on a platter. |
| The feast was befouled by murder. | The feast was befouled by murder. |
| The murder of Agamemnon anticipates the perils Odysseus will face. | The murder of John the Baptist anticipates the perils Jesus will face. |

Not only was the murder of Agamemnon in the epic available to Mark, it was the target of other imitations, such as Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Seneca's *Agamemnon*.

These analogies supply an additional detail to the tale that binds the deaths of Agamemnon and John more tightly. Although the *Odyssey* states that Aegisthus himself slew Agamemnon, post-Homeric narratives increasingly blamed Clytemnestra for the murder.[16] According to Homer and Aeschylus, her weapon of choice was the sword, but Sophocles depicted her with the double-bladed ax.[17] Nearly a century before Sophocles, however, an unknown sculptor portrayed Clytemnestra with an ax attacking her husband, apparently inspired by Homer's comparison of Agamemnon's murder with the sacrifice of an ox.[18] Homer described the slaying of an ox in 3.448–54: "[T]he son of Nestor, Thrasymedes, high of heart, came near and dealt the blow; and the axe cut through the sinews of the neck. . . . [T]he men raised the heifer's head from the broad-wayed earth and held it, and Peisistratus, leader of men, cut the throat." In one of Euripides' many references to this event, he suggests that Clytemnestra's ax struck the necks of her victims.[19] Seneca, Mark's near contemporary, leaves no doubt that she had decapitated Agamemnon. Clytemnestra "in mad rage snatches a two-edged axe and, as at the altar the priest marks with his eye the oxen's neck before he strikes, so, now here, now there, her impious hand she aims. He has it! the deed is done! The scarce severed head hangs by a slender part; here blood streams o'er his headless trunk, there lie his moaning lips."[20]

Ancient artists made Clytemnestra's ax a standard feature of her iconography. Frequently one finds her about to strike Agamemnon on the head or neck as Aegisthus is about to pierce him with a sword.[21] Philostratus the Elder described a painting in which Clytemnestra wielded her ax and one of her husband's soldiers lay dead, decapitated.[22] At the murder of Aegisthus by Orestes, one again finds her wielding the double-bladed ax, often above the heads of her enemies.[23] Just as Clytemnestra and Aegisthus slew — even beheaded! — Agamemnon at a feast as though he were the ox to be roasted, Herodias and the executioner slew John at a feast and served up his head on a platter, instead of the head of an ox.

Mark's indebtedness to Homer might also explain its most obvious disagreement with Josephus, who ascribed the death of John to Herod's political acumen: Mark ascribed it to Herodias's lust. The causes of the murders of Agamemnon and John were royal menages à trois between unfaithful women, their lawful husbands, and close relatives of their husbands: Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, and Aegisthus; Herodias, Philip, and Herod "the king." Agamemnon and John, each in his own way, represent threats to the illicit unions, and for this reason each was slain.

Evidence of emulation of Homer's tale is difficult to establish but not impossible to imagine. Agamemnon was no saint. He has slain his own daughter, Iphigenia, to promote the Trojan War, brought his Trojan mistress into his home,

and thus caused Clytemnestra's profound and enduring resentment. Her murder of her husband, while by no means justified, is comprehensible. John, on the other hand, was guiltless. Mark depicts him as an ascetic; his threat to Herod and Herodias was not the threat of a romantic rival but of a pesky prophet. Consequently, John's virtues outstripped those of Agamemnon; the guilt of Herodias outstripped that of Clytemnestra.

# 10

## *Feasts for Thousands*

Twice in Mark, Jesus feeds thousands with a small quantity of bread and dried fish. Scholars variously explain Mark's twin episodes as evidence of two historical events, as two reports of a single event, as two performances of a popular legend, or as evidence of a pre-Marcan chain of miracle stories characterized by two cycles of similar tales.[1] No matter what the origin of the feeding stories, the presence of both in the Gospel is strategic and intentional. The second story begins by reminding the reader that "there was *again* a great crowd without anything to eat," like "the great crowd" of five thousand fed earlier. Later, Jesus reminds the Twelve of both miraculous feedings and uses them and the disciples' oblivion to epitomize their incomprehension: "Do you not yet understand?"[2] Their failure to understand the significance of the feeding miracles prepares the reader for their failure to understand the Last Supper. If Mark knew only one miraculous feeding story, he had sufficient literary reasons for doubling it. This chapter will argue that neither story existed before Mark; he created both of them from biblical and epic antecedents.

The setting of the stories in the wilderness, the vast number of people fed, and the provident supply of bread have caused many critics to suppose the stories echo God's provision of manna during the wilderness wanderings of Israel, but most details and the structure of the stories owe nothing to Jewish wilderness traditions. The narration more closely resembles the multiplication of loaves

attributed to Elisha. "A man came from Baithsarisa and brought to the man of God twenty loaves of barley and fruit bread. Elisah said, 'Give it to the people and let them eat.' His servant said to him, 'How can I offer this before one hundred men?' And he said, 'Give it to the people, for thus says the Lord, "They shall eat and have some left." ' And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the Lord."[3] The parallels between this story of Elisha and those about Jesus are too close to ascribe to happenstance. A man of God commands someone to share an inadequate supply of bread with a large company. Those told to do so respond with an incredulous question, but in the end they comply. The crowd eats until satisfied, and a healthy surplus remains. If Mark's readers were aware of this antecedent, they probably would have noted Jesus' greater power. The prophet's twenty loaves fed one hundred (1:5); Jesus' five loaves fed five thousand (1:1000), with twelve baskets to spare. Furthermore, Jesus repeated the feat, feeding four thousand with seven loaves (1:571), with seven baskets of surplus.

The supply of manna in the wilderness and Elisha's multiplication of the loaves might seem to preclude additional literary influence, but these texts cannot account for several important details. For example, Mark portrays Jesus as an exemplary host, a subtlety interpreters often slight in favor of the blatantly miraculous. Preceding the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus invited his disciples to take a short vacation: " '[C]ome away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat."[4] Jesus had compassion on the crowd, "because they were like sheep without a shepherd,"[5] and he refused to send them away hungry, even though feeding them would have cost him dearly. Taking the few supplies available, he spread a humble but copious feast and ordered the disciples around like waiters. He told them to arrange several grand "drinking parties," like so many "garden plots" on the "green grass," apparently because verdant grass offered greater comfort than the rocky shore or prickly dry grass. Jesus gave a proper blessing and sent his disciples to serve the guests. Everyone ate to satiety. The disciples dutifully gathered the remaining fragments, one basket each. The fare was modest, but the service superb.

Jesus' manners hold up during the second meal. Again he had "compassion for the crowd" and would not consider sending them away without a meal. The crowd again took their seats; Jesus again prayed and divided the loaves and fish; everyone had plenty and went home satisfied; the disciples again picked up after the crowd.

One should also observe in the two feeding stories significant differences impossible to explain from biblical antecedents. Although both stories take place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus arrives at the first location by boat and at the

second by land. Although in both stories Jesus commands the crowds to recline, only in the first do they do so in well-organized groups. The thousands fed in the first story were men (ἄνδρες), no women; those fed in the second presumably included women. The presence of two stories instead of one, the connections of the stories with sailing, the emphasis on hospitality, and these subtle differences between the two accounts may be evidence that the evangelist had in mind the twin feasts that begin Books 3 and 4 of the *Odyssey.*

The feasts of Nestor at Pylos and Menelaus at Sparta, central events in the so-called *Telemachia,* clearly are doublets.[6] Telemachus went to Pylos and Sparta to consult with the Achaean heroes about his father's whereabouts. At the feasts Telemachus learned little about his father, but he did learn good manners. Homer contrasted Nestor and Menelaus with the suitors, who demonstrated their boorish greed and hubris by constantly feasting on Odysseus's estate—eating his livestock and drinking his wine. Even though their fare came from another's pantry, they begrudgingly shared it with hungry beggars.

When Nestor and his sons first saw Athena and Telemachus, "all came thronging about them and clasped their hands in welcome, and bade them sit down." They offered them appetizers, asked them to offer prayers to Poseidon, and gave them a golden cup for libations, first to Athena/Mentes, the elder of the two guests. Impressed by their social graces, Athena prayed that Poseidon grant renown to Nestor and his sons and that the god receive their sacrifices with favor. Nestor did not ask his guests their names until their bellies were full.[7]

But Nestor could not compete with Menelaus as a host. The double wedding party for his children included extravagant supplies, a minstrel, and two acrobats. Despite the private nature of the event, Menelaus invited the strangers to dine before knowing who they were; indeed, he scolded the servant who suggested sending them on their way unfed. He even fed their horses, told his maidservants to bathe his guests, anoint them, and provide them "fleecy cloaks and tunics." They sat at the head table.[8] Menelaus and Helen did not learn the identities of their guests until after dinner. Telemachus mastered his lessons in manners, for when he returned home, he showed his good upbringing even at the hut of a swineherd and refused to take a seat from an old beggar—his father in disguise.

Because meals and accompanying hospitality were topoi in ancient literature, the mere presence of twinned feasts in the epic and the Gospel requires no contact whatsoever, but the parallels between Homer and Mark extend beyond generalities. Details in the story of Nestor's feast not found in the story of Menelaus appear in the feeding of the five thousand and not in its twin. Similarly, details in the story of Menelaus not found in the story of Nestor appear in the feeding of the four thousand and not in the first story. The chances of these correspondences deriving from accident are slim. The most satisfactory explanation is Mark's

imitation of the epic. These correlations pertain to five narrative elements: Jesus' arrival at the feedings, the numbers and genders of the guests, the seating arrangements, the blessings and distribution of the food, and the voyages following the feedings.

### *The Journeys to the Feedings*

Telemachus sailed to the feast of Nestor at Pylos, on the shore of the sea, but he had to travel by chariot to landlocked Sparta for the second feast. Similarly, Jesus sailed to the first feast but traveled overland to the second, even though it, too, took place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.[9] Jesus plays a role similar to that of Telemachus in these voyages, but in the feeding stories themselves he no longer plays the part of Telemachus but of the hosts, Nestor and Menelaus. In other words, Mark's interest in characterizations, motifs, or episodes of the epic are more important than making Jesus correspond consistently to any single character.

### *The Numbers and Genders of the People Served*

When Telemachus and Athena arrived at Pylos, they witnessed a feast to Poseidon on the shore at which the celebrants sat divided into nine units, "and five hundred men were in each": four thousand five hundred. Later the poet makes it clear that at this feast only "the men (ἀνδρῶν) of Pylos" participated.[10] The male-only party in Homer presumably is due to the nature of the feast: a sacrifice by sailors to secure favorable weather and seas from Poseidon. The five thousand whom Jesus served at the shore of the Sea of Galilee likewise were exclusively male (ἄνδρες). Mark gives no justification for the presence only of men; Matthew added women and children.[11] The correlations of disembarkations at shores and the feedings of forty-five hundred or five thousand men are not accidental. They are Marcan flags.

Homer's second feast, at Menelaus's Sparta, was lavish but presumably smaller, and because it was a wedding feast, it included women. Similarly the crowd in Mark's second meal, though substantial, is smaller than at the first, and it, like the Spartan wedding, seems to have included women.

### *The Seating Arrangements*

Homer says that on the shore at Pylos, "nine seating groups there were, and five hundred sat in each."[12] Mark says that on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus told the disciples to have the five thousand men "recline on the green grass

in drinking parties. And they lay down by hundreds and fifties in garden bed arrangements."[13] Many interpreters multiply the numbers (50 x 100 = 5000) to depict the crowds sitting in a block, like an army. This would explain why only men ate at the feast: it symbolized an army like the one described in Exod. 18:21, even though the numbers and contexts do not correlate exactly.[14] But this reading makes no sense of the "drinking parties" or "garden bed arrangements," which suggest that the diners sat in separate groups, as in Luke 9:14, where they sat "in groups of about fifty each." One might more reasonably argue that the nine groups of five hundred in the epic have become an unspecified number of groups of hundreds and fifties in Mark's Gospel.

Mark uses two terms for sitting, ἀνακλῖναι and ἀνέπεσαν, both of which mean "recline," suggesting the meal was less a picnic than a banquet. Jesus' command that the crowds lie on the more comfortable "green grass" parallels the command that Telemachus and Athena sit on "soft fleeces upon the sand of the sea."

*Odyssey* 3.34–38

But when they *saw* the strangers they all came thronging about them, and clasped their hands in welcome, and *bade them sit down.* First Nestor's son Peisistratus came near and took both by the hand, and *made them to sit down* at the feast *on soft fleeces upon the sand of the sea.*

Mark 6:34 and 39–40

As he went shore, he *saw* a great crowd; and he had compassion on them. . . . He *ordered them to get all the people to recline on the green grass* in drinking parties. And *they lay down* by hundreds and fifties in garden bed arrangements.

These parallels not only solve the enigma of Mark's attention to seating by groups, they have no correlates in either of the second feasts: the wedding feast at Sparta and the feeding of the four thousand.

### *The Blessings and Distribution of the Food*

At the feast in Pylos, Peisistratus then served the hors d'oeuvres and asked the strangers pray to Poseidon. Both Athena and Telemachus offered their prayers. Jesus, too, prayed and served.

*Odyssey* 3.63–68

[S]he gave Telemachus the handsome two-handled cup, and in like manner the staunch son of Odysseus *prayed.* Then when they had roasted the outer flesh and drawn it off the spits, *they*

Mark 6:41–42

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he *looked up to heaven, and blessed,* and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and *he divided the two fish* among them all.

*divided the portions and partook of the glorious feast.* But when they had put from them the desire of food and drink . . .

*And all ate* and were filled.

One can detect similar parallels between the blessings and distributions in the feasts of Menelaus and the feeding of the four thousand. Both Menelaus and Jesus pitied their guests because they had gone so long without food. In both stories someone asked the potential host a question that discouraged him from showing hospitality. Menelaus's servant asked, "[S]hall we unyoke for them their swift horses, or send them on their way to some other host?[15] Jesus refused to "send them [the crowds] away hungry to their homes," but "his disciples replied: 'How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?' "[16] Both Menelaus and Jesus insisted on showing hospitality.

| *Odyssey* 4.30, 36, 51, 55–58, and 65–68 | Mark 8:6–8 |
|---|---|
| Then, stirred to exceeding displeasure, fair-haired Menelaus spoke to him. . . : | |
| "[B]ring the men in, that they may feast." . . . [T]hey *sat down on chairs* beside Menelaus. . . . And the revered housekeeper brought and set before them *bread,* and with it dainties in abundance, giving freely of what she had. | [T]hen he ordered the crowd *to sit down on the ground;* and he took seven *loaves,* and after giving thanks he broke them and *gave them* to his disciples to distribute; and they *distributed them* to the crowd. They also had *a few small fish;* and after blessing them, |
| And a carver lifted up and *set before them* platters of *all sorts of meats,* and set by them golden goblets. . . . So saying he [Menelaus] took in his hands roast meat and *set it before them. . . . So they put forth their hands to the good cheer lying ready before them.* But when they had put from them the desire of food and drink . . . | he ordered that these too should be *distributed. They ate* and were filled. |

Of course, one must be careful about attributing Jesus' prayer and division of the loaves and fish to dependence on the epic, insofar as Mark's vocabulary calls to mind the Last Supper and surely reflects Jewish blessings before meals. The importance of these parallels is the weight they add, however slight, to the accumulation of parallels between the two works.[17]

### *The Voyages Following the Feedings*

Immediately after feeding the crowds, Jesus sails from both places with his disciples. After the feeding of the five thousand, one reads of Jesus walking on the

water to the Twelve, at the end of which the narrator explains the astonishment of the disciples as evidence they did not understand the meaning of the multiplication of the loaves. After the feeding of the four thousand, one reads of two voyages: one to Dalmanutha, where he finds querulous Pharisees; one to Bethsaida, during which he rebukes the disciples for still not understanding, even after he had twice multiplied the loaves. Although there are few verbal parallels between the voyages at the end of the two feeding stories, they seem to be doublets. After both feasts in Books 3 and 4 of the *Odyssey*, one finds lengthy accounts of the return voyages of the Achaeans.

Mark surely could have had access to these Homeric feasts; the *Telemachia* played an important role in ancient Greek education. Furthermore, Mark's imitation had ancient analogies. The Book of Tobit, though written in Aramaic, almost certainly modeled the journey of Tobias to Ecbatana to fetch his father's money after the journey of Telemachus to the mainland to search for his father. The feast of Menelaus and Helen was the primary model for Tobias's feast with Azariah and Edna.[18] The feast of Nestor informed Vergil's account of Aeneas's reception by Evander and probably an episode of the *Acts of Andrew*.[19] The double wedding feast of Menelaus becomes an opportunity in the *Acts of Andrew* for the apostle to convince the couples to cancel their elaborate celebrations and remain chaste.[20]

Furthermore, the parallels between the *Telemachia* and Mark's feasts are dense and sequential. Both Mark and the *Odyssey* narrate twin meals in which characters provided abundant stores for vast crowds: forty-five hundred men by Nestor and an unnumbered crowd of men and women by Menelaus; five thousand men and four thousand people by Jesus. The twinned meals in both documents educate other characters. In Homer, the meals teach Telemachus etiquette and hospitality; in Mark, they teach of Jesus' power and compassion.

| *Odyssey* | Mark |
|---|---|
| *The first feast* | *The first feast* |
| Telemachus and Athena sailed and disembarked. | Jesus and disciples sailed and disembarked. |
| They found a great crowd on the shore, 4,500 men (ἄνδρες). | They found a great crowd on the shore, 5,000 men (ἄνδρες). |
| Everyone sat down in "companies," nine groups of 500 each. | Everyone sat down in "drinking groups" and "garden beds" by 100s and 50s. |
| Peisistratus ordered his guests to sit. | Jesus had ordered people to sit. |
| Nestor sacrificed, and others prayed. | Jesus offered thanks to God. |
| They took the meat and divided the food. | Jesus took the loaves and fish and divided them. |
| Everyone ate and was filled. | Everyone ate and was filled. |

| *The second feast* | *The second feast* |
| --- | --- |
| Telemachus and Peisistratus rode to Sparta. | Jesus and disciples walked to Galilee. |
| Menelaus refused to send them away unfed. | Jesus refused to send his guests away unfed. |
| Everyone sat, men and women. | Everyone sat, apparently men and women. |
| They took bread, wine, and meat | Jesus took bread and fish |
| and distributed them. | and distributed them. |
| Everyone ate and was filled. | Everyone ate and was filled. |
| Homer used the meals to educate | Mark used the meals to illustrate Jesus' |
| Telemachus in hospitality. | hospitality and to educate his disciples |
| | concerning his generosity and power. |

Some of these parallels are pedestrian, but several of them are distinctive and may be considered flags alerting the reader to view them in light of the stories in the epic. The very presence of twin feasts in both books is unusual, but the flags apply particularly to the feeding of the five thousand: a voyage, a disembarkation, and a sacred meal for thousands of men. The parallels with the feast of Nestor also might explain Mark's curious seating of the men near the sea in organized groups.

Perhaps Mark's clearest flag is the reference to Jesus having the five thousand men sit "drinking party by drinking party [συμπόσια συμπόσια]." The feasts of Nestor and Menelaus were both called "symposia," even though the usual number of men at such parties was somewhere between three and twenty-eight. Women seldom attended. One of the garrulous diners among Athenaeus's "supper-sages" went on at length about Homeric symposia, including those of Nestor and Menelaus, and used them as examples of how such parties should be conducted.[21] Athenaeus also viewed Homer's feasts as the model for symposia in later literature.[22]

What would Mark's readers have gained if they did indeed read the tales against the epic? Are these parallels interpretable? Nestor and Menelaus provided meals from their fabled wealth; Jesus from his divine powers. The inspiration for this aspect of the stories probably came from Elisha's multiplication of loaves as told in 2 Kings 4:42–44. Jesus offered his guests only bread and dried fish, not the lavish spread of an epic table. More important, Mark did not present Jesus' generosity and manners as examples for the disciples concerning how to throw a party for strangers, the lesson for Telemachus. Rather, the didactic force of Mark's feeding stories was to demonstrate Jesus' power and solicitude to help those in need. Homer invested in chivalry; Mark in christology.

# 11

## *Transfigurations*

Mark narrates the Transfiguration of Jesus as follows:

> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no launderer on earth could whiten them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.[1]

The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain has prompted scholars to look to the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai/Horeb for the primary inspiration of this scene. As one recent interpreter has pontificated, "[I]t is beyond reasonable doubt that the Transfiguration is fundamentally a visionary representation of the Sinai motif of Exod. 24."[2] Like Jesus, Moses ascended a mountain, taking with him part way Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders. Moses himself continued up the mountain, and a "cloud covered the mountain" for six days. God appeared "like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain." Among the commandments were instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, perhaps

reflected in the "tents" offered by Peter in Mark.[3] After the second giving of the Law, Moses descended from the mountain with a face so radiant from having been with God that the Israelites feared him.[4] Elijah, too, had a vision of God on Mount Sinai/Horeb (1 Kings 19), which makes him a fitting companion to Moses for this scene in Mark.

Jewish antecedents, however, cannot explain other details in the story. An earlier chapter discussed the Transfiguration in the context of the so-called messianic secret, an adaptation of Odysseus's insistence on secrecy lest his enemies learn who he was. Odysseus's dog Argos and his nurse Eurycleia recognized him on their own, but others learned of his identity only when Odysseus revealed himself to them. Prior to the slaying of the suitors, Odysseus invariably insisted on silence.

Several motifs of these recognition scenes appear in the Transfiguration. Jesus selected three of his most trustworthy associates, provided them unmistakable proofs of his identity, and insisted on silence: "[H]e ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." The Transfiguration especially resembles Odysseus's transfiguration to his son Telemachus.

Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus had taken refuge in the hut of Eumaeus the swineherd when Telemachus returned from his journey to Nestor and Menelaus. Eumaeus welcomed the youth affectionately and introduced him to the beggar. By treating the stranger graciously, Telemachus demonstrated his superlative moral character. Athena came to Odysseus and said, "[N]ow tell your son your secret and do not hide it."[5] She touched him with her wand and transformed his appearance into "his youthful bloom." When Telemachus saw him in this form, he

> gazed at him, wonderstruck, terrified too, turning
> his eyes away, suddenly—
> this must be some god—
> and he let fly with a burst of exclamations:
> "Stranger, you're a new man—not what I saw before!
> Your clothes, they've changed, even your skin has changed—
> surely you are some god who rules the vaulting skies!
> Oh be kind, and we will give you offerings,
> gifts of hammered gold to warm your heart—
> spare us, please, I beg you!"[6]

Telemachus understandably misinterpreted Odysseus's metamorphosis as an epiphany, like that of Aphrodite to Anchises in *Homeric Hymn* 5. The goddess took the form of a mortal maiden but remained so radiant that Anchises suspected she was a goddess.

> Now when Anchises saw her, he marked her well
> and wondered at her mien and shining garments,
> for she was clad in a robe out-shining the brightness of fire,
> a splendid robe of gold.[7]

Anchises responded appropriately: "I will make you an altar upon a high peak, in a far seen place, / and will sacrifice rich offerings to you at all seasons."[8] This pattern of revelation-fear-sacrifice was stock, known both to the bard and his ancient readers.

True to the pattern, Telemachus feared the metamorphosis of the beggar, offered sacrifices, and asked for mercy in case he were a god disguised to test his hospitality of strangers.[9] There he was with a god on his hands in the hut of a swineherd without having invited him to his magnificent home! Odysseus reassured him that this was no theophany, just a paterophany.

> "No, I am not a god."
> the long-enduring, great Odysseus returned.
> "Why confuse me with one who never dies?
> No, I am your father.[10]

Telemachus remained unconvinced.

> Impossible for a mortal to work such marvels,
> not with his own devices, not unless some god
> comes down in person, eager to make that mortal
> young or old — like that! Why, just now
> you were old, and wrapped in rags, but *now,* look,
> you seem like a god who rules the skies up there![11]

Odysseus again reassured him that he himself was no god, though his transformation was a god's doing: "the work of Athena," who gave him "beautiful clothes."[12] Father and son embraced, wept, and planned the slaying of the suitors. To prevail they must keep Odysseus's return a secret: "Let no one hear that Odysseus is at home."[13]

Surely Mark had access to this story. Vergil imitated the same scene in Aeneas's revelation of his identity to Dido, providing an analogy to Mark's imitation here.[14] The density and order of the parallels between the Transfiguration and Odysseus's transfiguration before Telemachus also indicate mimesis.

Like Odysseus, Jesus had a divine launderer.

| *Odyssey* 16.172–73 | Mark 9:3 |
| --- | --- |
| Athene touched him with her golden wand. | And he was transformed before them, |
| *A well-washed cloak and tunic* she first | and *his clothes* [ἱμάτια] *became* |

| | |
|---|---|
| of all put about his breast. [Cf. 16.207–10, where Athena is said to have given him "beautiful clothing (εἵματα)."] | *dazzling white,*[15] *such as no launderer on earth could whiten them.* |

Mark's account here more closely resembles the *Odyssey* than it does Exodus, which says nothing of the alteration of Moses' clothing. It is Matthew and Luke who mention the brilliance of Jesus' face, evidence that they read Mark's Transfiguration in light of Sinai, not Ithaca.[16] Mark, however, mentions only the transformation of Jesus' clothing, as in the epic.

Like Telemachus, Peter was terrified, overinterpreted what he saw, and offered tokens of worship.

| *Odyssey* 16.178–79, 181, and 183–85 (Fagles 200–201, 203–4, and 206–9) | Mark 9:5–6 |
|---|---|
| His own son gazed at him, *wonderstruck, terrified* too. . . . *And he spoke* . . . : | |
| "*Stranger,* you're a new man — not what I saw before. . . . [S]urely you | *Peter said* to Jesus, "*Rabbi,* |
| are some god who rules the vaulting skies! Oh be kind, | it is good for us to be here; |
| and *we will give you offerings, gifts* of hammered gold to warm your heart — | *let us make three tents,* one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what |
| *spare us,* please, I beg you!" | to say, for *they were terrified.* |

In both columns those who witnessed the transfigurations responded in fear and misidentification. Telemachus thought his father was a god; Peter thought Moses and Elijah were worthy of honor equal to that paid to Jesus. In both cases the solitary speaker, Telemachus or Peter, used a verb in the first-person-plural aorist subjunctive when offering the gift: "we will give," "let us make." One will not find these details in Exodus.

Odysseus would not let Telemachus give him anything: "I am no god; why do you liken me to the immortals? No, I am your father."[17] In Mark, on the other hand, the voice from the cloud revealed that Jesus was indeed divine, God's "beloved son." The disciples were to listen only to him and not liken him merely to Elijah and Moses. The revelations of the identities of the heroes are signs to their closest associates to take comfort in divine protection. Both the *Odyssey* and Mark have their heroes decline the gifts, and both rebuke someone for attributing divinity to a mortal. Telemachus must be certain to tell no one that his father had returned. Similarly, Jesus told Peter, James, and John to tell no one.

| *Odyssey* 16.301–3 | Mark 9:9–10a |
|---|---|
| *[L]et no one hear that Odysseus is at home*; neither let Laertes know it, nor the swineherd, nor any of the household, nor Penelope. | As they were coming down the mountain he *ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen,* until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. |
| [Telemachus kept the secret.] | So they kept the matter to themselves. |

The combination of motifs in *Odyssey* 16.172–303 and Mark 9:2–10 surely are not accidental. They are too dense and sequential.

| *Odyssey* 16.167–307 | Mark 9:2–10 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus was alone with Telemachus. | Jesus was alone with Peter, James, and John. |
| Athena transformed Odysseus and dressed him in a "well-washed cloak." | Jesus was transformed, "and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no launderer on earth could whiten them." |
| Telemachus was terrified by the transformation, thinking the beggar was a god, and offered gifts. | The disciples were terrified by the transformation and offered to construct three tents. |
| Odysseus refused; he was no god, but the boy's father. | A voice from heaven rebuked Peter and announced that Jesus was |
| Odysseus demanded that Telemachus keep his identity a secret. | God's son. Jesus demanded that his disciples tell no one what they had seen "until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." |
| Telemachus maintained secrecy. | The disciples maintained secrecy. |

Epiphanies were common in ancient literature, and several of these motifs are topoi, such as luminescent clothing, trembling, and offering gifts or establishing cult.[18] Other similarities, however, are distinctive. Odysseus and Jesus both wear clothing whitened by a heavenly launderer, Telemachus and Peter both err in ascribing divinity to mere mortals, and those who witness both transfigurations must be silent about what they saw. Most ancient epiphanies result in legends or cult, not in secrecy.

These parallels also are interpretable. Odysseus's transfiguration before Telemachus, though sufficiently similar to an epiphany for Telemachus to confuse his father with a deity, is an antiepiphany of sorts, a paterophany. The hero disabused his son of the notion he was a god. Mark's retelling of the story contains

*two* misidentifications. The disciples, like Telemachus, overinterpreted their vision of Moses and Elijah such that Peter suggested they, like Jesus, were worthy of shrines. The voice from heaven disabused them of this perception, insisting that they obey only Jesus. The second misidentification works in the opposite direction, making the scene into a bona fide epiphany. While Peter overestimated the status of Moses and Elijah, he had underestimated Jesus by addressing him as a mere "rabbi" and viewed him on par with the two patriarchs. The voice from the cloud put him right: "*This one* is my Son, the Beloved." Here too is a paterophany, the revelation of God as Jesus' father; but it is primarily an epiphany of Jesus' identity. Unlike Odysseus, who was a mere mortal, Jesus was the Son of God. The history of interpretation of the Transfiguration is rich and varied, but most ancient interpreters viewed it as an epiphany.[19]

A peculiar reference to the Transfiguration in 2 Pt. 1:16–18 suggests that already in the second century some may have dismissed it as just another epiphanic myth. Pseudo-Peter claims that he himself was present at the event: "For we did not follow cleverly constructed myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' For we ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain." The protests of the author apparently respond to opponents who charged that tales of Jesus' "power and coming" were "cleverly constructed myths," among which may have been the myth of the Transfiguration.[20] The author argued that he and other unnamed apostles were not transmitters of myth, but eyewitness initiates of the event itself.

It is quite possible that the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai provided Mark with the setting upon a mountain, the presence of a cloud, a heavenly voice, and other details. After all, Mark's Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah, both of whom were related to Mount Sinai. But the dynamics of the story are more like the transfiguration of Odysseus before Telemachus. Like the proverbial bee of ancient rhetoric, Mark harvested nectar from several blossoms—some Jewish and some Greek—and transformed them into gospel honey.

# 12

## *Blind Seers*

Jesus heals two blind men in Mark; each healing anchors a major unit of the narrative and contrasts the recovered sight of the blind men with the blindness of the sighted disciples. The first story appears immediately after Jesus' rebuking his disciples for not understanding the significance of the feedings of the thousands: "Although you have eyes, you do not see; and although you have ears, you do not hear."[1] Their incomprehension makes them like "those outside," who "may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand."[2] Jesus, however, makes the deaf hear and the blind see.

The section intervening Mark's healing of the two blind men consists primarily of Jesus instructing the Twelve concerning discipleship, including the inevitability of suffering. Jesus was "on the way, going up to Jerusalem," where he would suffer and die, but the disciples remained blind to this fate. The evangelist seems to have crafted much of 8:27–10:45 to highlight the spiritual and moral blindness of the disciples, who failed to understand the necessity of suffering.[3]

Mark then contrasted the blindness of the disciples with the insight of a second blind man. "As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even

more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' "[4] Bartimaeus showed remarkable perspicacity. Those around him announced the arrival of "Jesus of Nazareth," but the blind man addressed him as "son of David," a title Mark surely intended as a messianic identification.[5] Bartimaeus's appeal for mercy and later for healing show that he recognized in Jesus the power of God. In other words, he apparently knew something about Jesus that those who tried to silence him did not.

When Jesus heard Bartimaeus's appeal, he "stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus." Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" and he answered, " 'Rabbouni, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way."[6] Insofar as "the way" in Mark usually refers to Jesus' death, Bartimaeus seems to have decided to share this fate. In other words, Bartimaeus became a disciple equal or even superior to the Twelve. Whereas they had eyes but could not see, the blind man saw by faith and thus received his sight. Bartimaeus was an oxymoron, a μάντις ἀλαός, "blind seer."[7]

A blind seer plays an important role in the *Odyssey* as well. Traditions varied concerning Tiresias's loss of sight, but one popular myth gave this etiology. One day he saw two snakes copulating, killed the female, and immediately became female himself. After several years, a marriage, and children, she saw the same scene, this time killing the male, which made her male again. In order to settle their spat concerning which gender took more pleasure from lovemaking, Zeus and Hera consulted Tiresias for his/her expert opinion. When he answered that the pleasure of the female far exceeded the male's, Hera blinded him. To compensate him for his loss, Zeus granted him supernatural powers of prediction.[8] Tragedians made good use of his reliability as a forecaster to provide insight or even to reveal the future to the sighted.[9] Sophocles provides a particularly instructive analogy to Mark's imitation. In *Oedipus Tyrannus* Oedipus mocked Tiresias for being "blind in your ears, in your mind, and in your eyes." The blind seer retorted that it was Oedipus who was blind: "[Y]ou have sight, but cannot see what trouble you are in."[10] When the king finally recognized the outrage he had inflicted on his father and mother, he blinded himself. Ironically, in *Oedipus at Colonus* the blind king himself became clairvoyant, playing a role similar to that of Tiresias.

Homer placed Tiresias at the center of the *Odyssey,* in Book 11, the nekyia, or visit to Hades. Circe told Odysseus that in order to continue his voyage, he must go to the most unlikely of places, Hades, to consult the most unlikely of guides, a

dead blind man. Odysseus sailed off as instructed, performed the requisite rites, and waited for the soul of Tiresias to emerge from Hades to drink blood from the pit. Even before sipping the wit-producing blood and without anyone saying a word, Tiresias recognized Odysseus's identity, not with his eyes but with clairvoyance. "Then there came up the soul of the Theban Teiresias, bearing his golden staff in his hand, and he knew me and spoke to me: 'Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus.' "[11] One scholion states that Tiresias knew Odysseus "with his mind, not with his eyes, for he was blind." Another scholion notes: "[T]he knowledge of his intellect compensated for the defect of his eyes."[12]

After Tiresias drank the blood, he warned Odysseus of the suffering he must endure on his voyages and at home.[13] Tiresias also told Odysseus that he must control his comrades, for if they slew the cattle of Helios, they would all perish. As always, Tiresias was right: they slew the cattle and thus all drowned at sea, leaving Odysseus to face his opponents alone. He also told Odysseus how he would die. When "he had declared his prophecies," the blind seer "went back into the house of Hades."[14]

Greek artists portrayed Tiresias's bisexuality by dressing him like a woman. On a vase dating to about 450 B.C.E., the blind seer carries his characteristic cane and wears a himation, a loose-fitting cloak, draped over his head like a veil.[15] An Etruscan mirror from the end of the fifth century depicts him leaning sleepily against his walking stick in the presence of Odysseus and Hermes, who are nude. A clean-shaven Tiresias, however, wears a woman's headband and slippers; his garment is a short himation resembling a woman's dress.[16] From about the same period an Etruscan mural shows him bearded with his himation again over his head like a veil.[17] An ancient Greek vase shows the bearded, hoary head of the prophet emerging from the netherworld at the feet of Odysseus and two of his crew, all of whom are nude. Folds of a himation grace Tiresias's barely visible shoulder.[18] An Italian crater shows a bearded Tiresias holding a cane and dressed in a woman's dress, as does a Greek vase from the late fourth century B.C.E.[19] The folds of a himation or dress can still be seen on a damaged Theban relief.[20] Another relief, this one contemporary to Mark, shows Odysseus, nude, addressing Tiresias. The prophet, seated and holding his walking stick, wears a himation, again draped over his head.[21]

No text mentions Tiresias's distinctive clothing, but his dress is relevant to a curious passage in the *Acts of Andrew*. Andrew arrived in Amasia "and kept silent." "A blind man approached him and said, 'Andrew, apostle of Christ, I know that you are able to restore my sight, but I do not want to receive it. Rather, I ask that you order those with you to give me money for adequate clothing and food.' "[22] The parallels with the *Odyssey* are striking:

| *Odyssey* 11.90–92 | GE 2 |
| --- | --- |
| Then there *came up* the soul of the Theban *Teiresias,* bearing his golden staff in his hand, *and he knew me and spoke to me*: "Son of Laertes, *sprung from Zeus, Odysseus* of many devices . . ." | [*A*] *blind man approached* him *and said to him,* "*Andrew, apostle of Christ, I know* that you are able to restore my sight." |

Because the blind man correctly identified him, Andrew recognized that he was no ordinary beggar but a blind seer. The source of the man's blindness and brilliance was "the Devil, who does not allow that man to regain his sight," like the diabolical Hera, who deprived Tiresias of his vision. The God of Andrew, on the other hand, restored vision to the blind.

The blind seer did not ask for healing but for money for food and clothing. The conclusion of the story again makes a point of his wardrobe. "Turning around, Andrew touched his eyes, and immediately he received light and glorified God. Because the man's clothing was cheap and coarse, the apostle said, 'Remove his filthy rags and give him new clothing.' Nearly everyone was stripping off their clothes, so the apostle said, 'Let him have only the essentials.' The man took the clothing, gave thanks, and returned to his home." Andrew refused to let the crowd strip themselves nude in order to dress the blind man, who was to be satisfied with the essentials. The author may have had in mind artistic representations of Tiresias dressed head to foot, often elegantly, while other characters were nude. Unlike Tiresias, who returned to the house of Hades still blind, the blind man "returned to his home" sighted and appropriately clothed.

Obviously Mark, too, had access to the myth of Tiresias, and the *Acts of Andrew* provides a mimetic analogy to the healing of Bartimaeus that also seems to imitate Odysseus's encounter with the blind seer. A "large crowd" traveled with Jesus and his disciples from Jericho; a throng of the dead surrounded Odysseus and his crew. Mark introduces his blind seer as "the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus." Elsewhere, when the earliest evangelist uses Aramaic words, he later provides the translation, but here the translation comes first: ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος, "the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus."[23] This phrase resembles Homer's favorite formula for Tiresias: ψυχὴ Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο, "the soul of Theban Tiresias."[24]

More relevant perhaps is the significance of the name itself. Bartimaeus is the only named recipient of Jesus' miracle working in the Synoptic Gospels. His name, though beginning with the Aramaic word for "son," בר, ends with the Greek τιμαῖος, "honored" or "prized."[25] Mark translates the name for his Greek reader, "son of Timaeus," perhaps to emphasize that this blind man (or at least his father) was noble. The name Tiresias likewise was significant, coming from τέρας, "sign" or "portent," an apt name for a prophet.

Tiresias and Bartimaeus both recognized the identities of their heroic guests and addressed them according to their parentage. The order of Bartimaeus's address to Jesus is unusual: "Son of David, Jesus." Matthew alters Mark to read, "Lord, son of David"; Luke reads, "Jesus, son of David."[26] In other words, both rewritings of Mark move "son of David" to the end of the address, which conforms to Mark's own style elsewhere.[27] The distinctive order here, however, conforms to Tiresias's recognition of Odysseus: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus."

When Jesus summoned Bartimaeus to come to him, he threw off his himation, the very garment ancient artists most often draped over Tiresias. Mark has woven the cloak into his story to refer to the most famous blind seer of antiquity. Jesus told Bartimaeus to go away, like Tiresias, who "went back into the house of Hades." Rather, Bartimaeus joined Jesus "on the way" to his death. He, more than the Twelve, seems to have understood suffering.[28]

The parallels between Tiresias and Bartimaeus are not particularly dense or sequential, but they are distinctive and interpretable. Mark crafted a strong contrast with the epic, an emulation. Odysseus was unable to heal the blind sage, who, after giving his prophecy, disappeared back into the throngs of Hades. Jesus, however, healed Bartimaeus and allowed him to travel with him. Clement of Alexandria presented Christ calling Tiresias to recover his sight: "Come to me, old man, you too. Leaving Thebes and throwing away prophecy and Bacchic revelry, be led by the hand to truth. Look, I give you the wood [of the cross] to lean on. Hurry, Tiresias, believe! You will see! Christ, through whom the eyes of the blind recover their sight, shines more brightly than the sun. Night will flee you; fire will fear you; death will leave you. Though you cannot now see Thebes, old man, you will see heaven."[29] Not only will Tiresias recover his sight, he will be saved from Hades: night, fire, and death.

One might schematize the parallels between Tiresias and Mark's Bartimaeus as follows: Odysseus and his crew hoped to sail home, but none of them knew the route. Ironically, they needed to consult a blind man in Hades. When the crew learned of this journey to the dead, they wept. Odysseus met the soul of Tiresias, who emerged from the nether gloom to drink the blood, and who, though blind, recognized the noble identity of his visitor, correctly addressing him as "son of Laertes, Odysseus." When he had informed Odysseus of his fate, Tiresias returned to Hades, still blind and dead. Jesus and his retinue traveled toward Jerusalem, where he would die, though his disciples could not understand his need to suffer. Ironically, a blind man understood better than they, for he recognized the noble identity of his visitor, addressing him as "Son of David, Jesus." Bartimaeus asked to be healed, Jesus consented, and the former blind man joined the journey to Jerusalem, unlike Tiresias, who remained blind and in Hades.

# 13

## *Untriumphal Entries*

Immediately after the story of Bartimaeus, one reads Mark's so-called Triumphal Entry. Jesus sent two disciples to acquire a colt on which he would ride into Jerusalem, apparently under the influence of Zech. 9:9.

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
> Proclaim it, O daughter Jerusalem!
> Behold, your king comes to you;
> just and saving is he,
> humble and riding on a beast for the yoke,
> even a young colt.[1]

The disciples brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments on it for a makeshift saddle. He then rode it into the city amid the acclamations of the crowd, modeled after Ps. 118:25–26. Some interpreters have seen here evidence also of Zechariah 14, where one finds a procession starting at the Mount of Olives and entering Jerusalem.

Biblical models, however, cannot account for several important details or even the theological significance of the scene. For these one should look to Odysseus's untriumphal entry into the city of the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 6 and 7. Odysseus barely survived his shipwreck in Book 5 and washed up, entirely naked, on the shore of Scheria. At the beginning of Book 6, the hero was more destitute, vulner-

able, and desperate than at any time in the epic. His divine protector, Athena, appeared to the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa in a dream telling her to ask her father "to make ready mules and a wagon" so that she could take her laundry to the river.[2] Her father complied, and the maiden took the mule wagon, laden with dirty clothes, to the shore.

As Nausicaa and her maidens washed and played at the shore, Odysseus awoke, naked and famished from twenty days at sea. He fell at Nausicaa's feet, begging for hospitality in a strikingly ironic scene: the king of Ithaca, champion of the Trojan War, darling of Athena, is now on his knees, naked, caked with brine, and groveling for clothing and hospitality from a young girl. She gave him clothing and told him to bathe. He returned and "sat apart, / glistening in his glory, breathtaking, yes, / and the princess gazed in wonder." She told her companions, "The gods of Olympus can't be all against this man. . . . / At first he seemed appalling, I must say— / now he seems like a god."[3] Frequently Odysseus would have to disabuse the Phaeacians of the notion that he was divine.[4]

Nausicaa folded her garments, placed them in the wagon, mounted it, and told Odysseus, "While we're passing along the fields and plowlands, / you follow the mules and wagon, stepping briskly / with all my maidens. I'll lead the way myself." In this manner Odysseus would avoid detection by the Phaeacians until he reached the city walls. "[S]he drove with care that the maidens and Odysseus might follow on foot. . . . Then the sun set, and they came to the glorious grove, sacred to Athena."[5] Odysseus stayed there until Nausicaa's wagon and entourage arrived at the palace. He, too, then entered the city and approached Alcinous's palace. "There he stood, and his heart pondered much before he reached the threshold of bronze; for there was a gleam as of sun or moon over the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alcinous."[6] Here, too, he admired the utopian glory of the palace, including the ever-bearing fruit trees and magical springs, one flowing hot, the other cold. "And there Odysseus stood, / gazing at all this bounty."[7] He then entered the Phaeacian palace, not as a guest but as an intruder shrouded in mist, until he threw himself at the knees of Queen Arete, asking for a ship to take him home.

This scene is an assault on the rules of ancient hospitality. The reader of the epic knows what ought to happen when strangers arrived at someone's home, for Homer had established the pattern already in Books 3 and 4. The male host, his sons, or his servants should have welcomed the strangers, tended to their horses, if any, offered them baths, and treated them to a feast. Later, the guests might meet female members of the family.

Odysseus's welcome among the Phaeacians makes shambles of this pattern and sets up conditions for irony. In the first place, the hero does not first encounter the dominant male, his sons, or his servants, but a nubile girl with her handmaids far

from the house. Second, Nausicaa should have granted immediate hospitality and escorted the stranger to the palace herself, instead of making him enter alone.[8] Third, when Odysseus finally did enter the palace, he did not approach the king but Queen Arete, as Nausicaa had coached him. Fourth, after pleading for hospitality, "he sat down on the hearth in the ashes by the fire."[9]

The old Phaeacian sage Echeneus recognized this scene was out of whack and cajoled the king to set things right:

> This is no way, Alcinous. How indecent, look,
> our guest on the ground, in the ashes by the fire!
> . . . . . .
> Come, raise him up and seat the stranger now,
> in a silver-studded chair,
> and tell the heralds to mix more wine for all
> so we can pour out cups to Zeus who loves the lightning,
> champion of suppliants — suppliants' rights are sacred.
> And let the housekeeper give our guest his supper,
> unstinting with her stores.[10]

This is precisely what happens next — what should have happened from the start. Odysseus's entry into the city was a comedy of social errors, a picaresque parade, an untriumphal entry.

Clearly Mark could have had access to this famous story, and his potential imitation had several ancient analogies. Odysseus's journey to the Phaeacians served as a model for several other tales of heroes arriving at alien locations, marveling at the remarkable buildings and gardens, and seeking hospitality from the rulers of the region. The Argonauts beached their ship at the shores of Colchis, where Jason and a few comrades proceeded secretly to the palace of Aeetes to ask for the golden fleece. Hera covered them in a mist, as Athena covered Odysseus.[11] When the mist dissipated, "they stood at the entrance [of the palace], marvelling at the king's courts and the wide gates and columns."[12] Then they saw Aeetes's garden. "[V]ines covered with green foliage were in full bloom," and in the garden were four springs, one flowing with milk, one with wine, one with oil, and one with water that alternated warm and cold.[13] Clearly Apollonius "draws heavily on . . . Odysseus' walk to Alcinous' city" when narrating the walk of the Argonauts to the palace of Aeetes.[14]

Vergil has Aeneas and his comrade Achates, after near shipwreck, going to the palace of Dido, the queen of Carthage. On the way they saw "marvelous buildings, gateways, cobbled ways," causing Aeneas to say, "How fortunate these are / Whose city walls are rising here and now!"[15] In addition he saw a beautiful shaded grove and a temple to Juno.

> When the mist that surrounded them vanished, Aeneas
> Stood and shone in the bright light, head and shoulders
> Noble as a god's. For she who bore him
> Breathed upon him beauty of hair and bloom
> Of youth and kindled brilliance in his eyes.[16]

The Trojan heroes told the queen of their ordeals at Troy and on the sea and sought hospitality. They received it, as had Odysseus.

A Greek novel (now surviving only in Latin) known as the *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre* tells how this young king survived a ferocious storm at sea by riding a plank to the shores of Pentapolis. Naked, like Odysseus, Apollonius sought help from an old fisherman, who covered the king's nakedness with his cloak and directed him to the town, thus playing a role like Nausicaa's. The king in a tattered garment made his way toward the city, where he chanced on meeting King Archistrates, who invited him to dinner at the palace and even provided him clothing suitable for the feast. The meal was sumptuous, but Apollonius could not eat; instead, he marveled at the elegant gold and silver of the palace. The king's daughter, yet another imitation of Nausicaa, showed interest in the stranger and asked him who he was. He responded much as Odysseus had to Alcinous. "If you want to know my name, it's Apollonius; if you want to know my fortune, I lost it at sea."[17] In the end, King Archistrates gave the stranger conveyance home. This scene clearly imitates *Odyssey* 6 and 7.[18]

Apollonius, Vergil, and the author of *Apollonius King of Tyre* independently imitated Odysseus's entry into the city of the Phaeacians, even though no two authors borrowed precisely the same elements. In each case, however, the hero arrives in an alien land needing the hospitality of the locals. Each involves the hero marveling at the glories of the new environment: its buildings, gardens, or gold and silver objects. In one case, as in the *Odyssey,* the hero shines like a god. Aeneas and Apollonius receive the hospitality they sought; Jason and the Argonauts do not.

It is in light of this literary tradition that one should read Mark's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Like Odysseus arriving on the shores of Scheria, Jesus arrived in Jerusalem apparently destitute and needing hospitality. Athena had told Nausicaa to ask her father for a brace of mules and a wagon to do her wash. Jesus and his followers owned no animal, but he needed a colt to fulfill the prophecy of Zech. 9:9. He told two disciples, "Go into the village ahead of you and immediately as you enter it, you will find there a colt that has never been ridden; untie and bring it."[19] The statement that the colt had "never been ridden" suggests that the animal was fit only for carrying burdens or pulling carts, like Nausicaa's mules. Jesus and Athena both were confident that their requests would be granted. When

Nausicaa and the two disciples asked for the animals, they obtained their requests.[20] Nausicaa took the mule wagon to the shore and there met Odysseus; the disciples "brought the colt to Jesus." Both heroes would return with the beasts.

The earliest evangelist does not say why those responsible for the colt allowed Jesus to borrow it. Commentators have opined that Jesus had made prior arrangements to borrow the beast, or that the owner had known Jesus by reputation, but such conjectures have no foundation in the text. Mark's Jesus had never before set foot in Jerusalem, and, for reasons unstated, those who allowed the colt to be taken displayed unusual generosity. Homer's account of Nausicaa's acquisition of the two mules and wagon from Alcinous presents the reader with no such difficulty. What king would deny his daughter conveyance so that she could wash her clothing? By replacing Nausicaa's father with total strangers, Mark created a problem for himself that he did not fully resolve.

When Nausicaa prepared to return to the city, she loaded her wagon with clean laundry.

| *Odyssey* 6.252–53 (Fagles 278–79) | Mark 11:7 |
|---|---|
| Folding the *clothes* [εἵματ'] *she packed them into her painted wagon,* hitched the sharp-hoofed *mules,* and *mounted the wagon herself.* | They brought the *colt* to Jesus *and threw their cloaks* [ἱμάτια] *on it;* and *he sat on it.* |

In the procession to the city of the Phaeacians, Nausicaa's wagon was followed by Odysseus, and the handmaids walked behind. Jesus rode to Jerusalem on the colt with others walking before and behind. Others spread before him their garments and "the leafy branches that they had cut in the fields."[21]

When Nausicaa saw Odysseus after he had bathed and dressed, she mistook him for a god. Similarly, those who accompanied Jesus into the city misidentified him: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" They thought Jesus was a scion of David and a political victor who would usher in a kingdom. The reader should know, however, that this scene is a parody. What king would enter a city riding on a borrowed colt fit only for cargo with two cloaks serving as a saddle? The misidentification of Jesus by the crowds apparently caricatures popular Jewish messianism, which the evangelist seems to have opposed in light of the recent debacle in Judea. Jesus would reign but not as an earthly monarch. Rather, he had to "suffer many things," die, and rise from the dead. He refuted the notion that the Messiah would be the son of David; the Messiah would not be the son of David but the Son of God.[22] The acclamation of the crowd demonstrates their misguided enthusiasm for a political savior, expressed by the shout "Hosanna!"

or "Save us, now!" Jesus is the savior, but he will not inaugurate "the coming kingdom of . . . David," for he came "not to be served," like a king, "but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many."

Odysseus and Jesus both arrived at their destinations at nightfall: "the sun set"; "the hour already was late." Because of the hour, Jesus did nothing in the temple except "cast his gaze about at everything" like an awestruck tourist and "went out to Bethany with the Twelve." This verse gives Jesus "an air of provincial naiveté," "like a country bumpkin seeing big city lights for the first time."[23] Similarly, when Odysseus entered the strange city, he ogled its magnificent buildings.[24]

The next day, Jesus returned to the temple and on the way saw "in the distance a fig tree in leaf [and] went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard it." Later, after Jesus drove merchants from the temple, the disciples discovered the tree had withered "from the roots" and died.[25] Quite apart from Jesus' environmental ruthlessness here, his curse seems altogether unfair; what was a poor fig tree to do when it was not the season for figs to bear? Jesus must have expected fig trees to bear fruit perennially.[26]

Because the cursing and withering pericopes bracket the so-called Cleansing of the Temple, the tree probably symbolizes the temple. Just as the fig, unlike an ideal tree, bore fruit only occasionally, the temple, falling short of its potential, bore fruit sporadically. Just as the fig tree withered from its roots, the temple, too, would be destroyed, which, for Mark's readers, had taken place in the recent past.[27]

William R. Telford has demonstrated the widespread uses of the fig as a metaphor for Israel's prosperity, sterility, and destruction, and he argued that Jewish tradition also can explain the phrase "for it was not the season for figs."[28] One of the blessings of the messianic age was that nature, transformed, would provide fruit even out of season, like the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve.[29] From this perspective, Jesus cursed the fig tree because it fell short of utopian expectations for the messianic age.

Unfortunately, Telford's best evidence for perpetually bearing trees comes from writings much later than Mark, and he identifies no single biblical or other prerabbinic text as a close parallel or possible source. Dating rabbinica is notoriously difficult, so one ought not insist too strictly on a proper chronology here. But even if the notion of perpetually bearing trees were current among Jews in the first century, it is by no means certain that Mark's intended readers — Gentiles for whom even basic Jewish customs required explanation — would have known this haggadic tradition. Mark's readers did not need to know Jewish eschatological expectations to understand the fig tree as a cipher for Israel; they merely had to

recognize Mark's sandwiching of Jesus' outrage at temple abuses between the two pericopes about the fig tree.

If Mark's readers related the Jerusalem fig tree to other trees, it would have been those of Alcinous. As Odysseus approached the glorious palace of the king of the Phaeacians, he marveled at its grandeur: everywhere gold, silver, fine fabrics, superb craftsmanship. Homer also describes in detail "a great orchard" rimmed with a hedge.

> Here luxuriant trees are always in their prime,
> pomegranates and pears, and apples glowing red,
> succulent figs [συκέαι] and olives swelling sleek and dark.
> And the yield of all these trees will never flag or die,
> neither in winter nor in summer, a harvest all year round
> for the West Wind always breathing through will bring
> some fruits to the bud and others warm to ripeness —
> pear mellowing ripe on pear, apple on apple,
> cluster of grapes on cluster, fig crowding fig [σῦκον δ' ἐπὶ σύκῳ].
> . . . . . .
> And there by the last rows are beds of greens,
> bordered and plotted, greens of every kind,
> glistening fresh, year in, year out.
> . . . . . .
> Such
> the gifts, the glories showered down by the gods
> on King Alcinous' realm.[30]

Alcinous's estate was a wonder of nature, a gift of the gods, a fabulous utopia. In comparison, the fig tree outside the Jerusalem temple was a puny failure, just as the temple itself fell short of the utopian perfection of the palace of Alcinous.

Mark's Jewish contemporary, Josephus, used Homer's description of the garden of Alcinous to describe the luxuriant area around the Chinnereth: "[F]or ten months without intermission it supplies those kings of fruits, the grape and the fig [σῦκον]; the rest [of the fruits] mature on trees the whole year round."[31] Josephus mentions five plants: the walnut, palm, olive, grape, and fig. *Gospel of Thomas* 19 mentions five trees in Paradise that do not change year round or lose their leaves, a possible allusion to the five trees in the garden of Alcinous.[32]

The parallels between Odysseus's entry into the Phaeacian palace and Jesus' entry into the Jewish Temple are dense and sequential.

| *Odyssey* 6 and 7 | Mark 11:1–14 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus arrived on the island of the Phaeacians bereft and unbefriended. | Jesus arrived in Judea without money or a host. |

Athena told Nausicaa to ask her father for mules and a wagon.
Nausicaa told her father she needed the wagon to do her wash.
Her father granted Nausicaa the mules.

Nausicaa went to the shore to wash clothing and there found Odysseus.
"Folding the *clothes she packed them into her painted wagon,* hitched the sharp-hoofed *mules,* and *mounted the wagon.*"
Odysseus, though a king, entered the city wearing someone else's clothing, behind a mule wagon carrying laundry.
Nausicaa thought Odysseus's coming was according to the will of the gods, and the Phaeacians thought he was divine.
He entered the city late in the day. "And there Odysseus stood, *gazing at all this bounty*" of glorious architecture and vegetation, including the fig trees that bore even out of season.

Jesus told two of his disciples to find a colt and bring it to him.
The disciples told those with the colt, "The Lord has need of it."
Those responsible for the colt allowed them to take it.

"They brought the *colt* to Jesus *and threw their cloaks on it;*
and *he sat on it.*"
Jesus, though the Son of God, entered the city in humility, riding on someone else's beast of burden with clothing for a saddle.
The crowds shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

On entering the temple late in the day, Jesus "*looked around at everything.*"

The next day, he cursed a fig tree for bearing no fruit, even though "it was not the season for figs."

Several details in Mark's story are sufficiently distinctive to serve as flags to the entry of Odysseus. The garments (ἱμάτια) used as a saddle resemble the garments (εἵματα) on Nausicaa's wagon. Homer repeatedly makes a point of Odysseus's amazement as he looked about Alcinous's fabulous palace.[33] The motif is organic and motivated in the epic, but not in Mark, where Jesus' looking around at everything in the temple seems strange and anticlimactic. Matthew and Luke may have thought so, too; they omitted it. The most obvious flag is the phrase "it was not the season for figs." The evangelist's model—at precisely this point in the story, after the procession to the city and before entering the palace—had spoken of an orchard with fig trees that bore fruit year round.

More subtle but no less distinctive is the use of irony. Odysseus and Jesus, though worthy of honor, enter new environments destitute, humble, and vulnerable. Had the Phaeacians known who the stranger was, they surely would have welcomed him immediately to their feast and offered to send him home.[34] Instead, he entered the city dressed in borrowed clothing, walking behind a cart of laundry in a parade of handmaids. Similarly, the Jewish authorities should have

welcomed the Son of God into Jerusalem and the temple, his "home." Instead, he entered on a borrowed, unridden colt, two cloaks for his saddle. His host in Bethany was Simon the leper, hardly a suitable host for a king.[35]

Mark's borrowing from the epic, however, was not simply imitative, it was emulative. Unlike Odysseus, Jesus here predicts the future: where the disciples would find the colt and how its owners would respond to Jesus' request for it. In this respect, he more closely resembles Athena, who told Nausicaa how to get the mule wagon from her father. Odysseus was mistaken for a god, though he was mortal; Jesus was mistaken for a political savior, the son of David, though he was the Son of God. Odysseus finally received the hospitality he deserved: a feast, precious gifts, and a voyage. Jesus, however, received nothing: no feast, no gifts, no glory, just murder, the ultimate violation of hospitality.

# 14

## *Anointing Women*

Mark 13:1–14:11 narrates Jesus' prophecies concerning the future, including his own return as the Son of Man and his anointing by an unnamed woman. These episodes have received energetic scholarly attention in large part because Jesus' prophecies in Mark 13 provide the best, if enigmatic, evidence for the dating of the Gospel relative to the Jewish War. Scholars generally view Mark 13 as an apocalypse of sorts insofar as it predicts future events, but the narrative framework into which the evangelist deposited his prophecies seems to have derived not from Jewish apocalypses but from *Odyssey* 19, which ancient readers knew as the *Niptra*, "Washing." Here Odysseus, in disguise, promised Penelope that her husband would soon return to destroy the suitors. To show her gratitude, she ordered Eurycleia to wash and anoint his feet. The same sequence appears in Mark: Jesus predicts his own return, and immediately afterward a woman anoints him.

According to the beginning of Book 19, Odysseus and Telemachus entered the palace, while Athena carried a gold lamp that illumined the entire building, causing Telemachus to comment on the magnificence of the sight.

> "Father," Telemachus suddenly burst out to Odysseus,
> "oh what a marvel fills my eyes! Look, look there—
> all the sides of the hall, the handsome crossbeams,
> pinewood rafters, the tall columns towering—

all glow in my eyes like flaming fire!
Surely a god is here—
one of those who rule the vaulting skies."[1]

Odysseus silenced Telemachus, telling him, "[T]his is the way of the gods." Similarly, Mark 13 begins with an expression of amazement at the splendor of the temple: "[O]ne of his disciples said to him, 'Teacher, look what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' " In the epic as in the Gospel, a lesser character marveled at the magnificence of a building, while the more dominant told him not to be so amazed. Isolated, these parallels are not compelling; indeed, one could compare other passages in the epic with the awe of the disciple in Mark.[2] The similarities between the two texts compared here, however, continue.

For the first time in the epic, Odysseus and Penelope found themselves alone in the same room. She offered him a seat so that "the stranger" could "sit down and tell his tale." Then she peppered him with questions, testing to see if he actually had seen her husband alive. Odysseus accurately told her how her husband dressed and correctly identified the herald who had accompanied him on his journey. Penelope "recognized the sure signs [σήματ'] that Odysseus told her." Odysseus continued, then, to comfort her by predicting that her husband was "near at hand."[3]

According to Mark, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, where his four closest associates questioned him, asking for a sign (σημεῖον) concerning the completion of "all these things."

*Odyssey* 19.102–5

Then the much-enduring, noble Odysseus
*sat down* [καθέζετ'] *upon* it [a chair],
and wise Penelope spoke first, and said:
[Penelope and Odysseus were alone.]
"Stranger, this question shall I myself
ask you first. *Who are you* among men,
*and from where?* Where is your city,
and where your parents?"

Mark 13:3–4

When he
*was sitting* [καθημένου] *on* the Mount of
Olives, opposite the temple,
Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him
privately,
"Tell us, *when will this be,*
*and what will be the sign* that all these
things are about to be accomplished?"[4]

The content of Jesus' answer to the disciples' question, 13:5–27, obviously reflects the evangelist's redaction of traditional materials into his own distinctive perspective on the Jewish War and the eschaton; even so, as in Odysseus's prophecies to Penelope, Jesus speaks in the third person about his own return.[5]

Closer parallels with the epic resume at verse 28. Odysseus told Penelope that her husband was consulting the prophetic oak of Zeus at Dodona about how he should return. Priests at the site interpreted the rustling of the leaves, or the location of doves in its branches, or the gurgling of the adjacent stream, or the clanging of bronze pots suspended from its limbs. Later texts attributed the tree itself—and even its lumber—with articulate speech. Whatever the teratological technology, ancients thought the oak spoke for Zeus. Jesus told the disciples that they, too, should consult a prophetic tree, not an oak but a fig.

| *Odyssey* 19.296–307 (cf. 14.327–30) | Mark 13:28–33 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus . . . had gone to Dodona to hear the will of Zeus from *the high-crested oak* of the god, namely how he might return to his own native land after so long an absence, whether openly or in secret. *Thus, as I tell you, he is safe, and will soon come; he is very near,* and not long will he now be far from his friends and his native land. Even so, *I will give you an oath.* Be Zeus my witness first, highest and best of gods, and the hearth of flawless Odysseus to which I have come, that in very truth *all these things shall be brought to pass* [τάδε πάντα τελείεται; cf. 309: ἔπος τετελεσμένον εἴη], | From *the fig tree* learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves you know that summer is near. *So also you,* when you see these things taking place, you know that *he is near at the very gates* [ἐπὶ θύραις].[6] *Truly I tell you,* |
| *even as I tell you.* *In the course of this very month shall Odysseus come* here, between the waning of this moon and the waxing of the next. | *this generation will not pass away* *until all these things have taken place* [ταῦτα πάντα γένηται; cf. 13:4: ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα]. Heaven and earth will pass away but *my words will not pass away.* . . . Beware, kept alert; for you do not know when *the time will come.* [Cf. 13:24: "the moon will not give its light."] |

In both columns a tree provides information concerning the return of the hero. In both, the speaker, referring to himself in the third person, comforts his intimate audience with the promise that the liberator is near ("he is very near"; "he is near") and provides assurance with an oath ("Be Zeus my witness"; "Truly I tell you"). In both, the heroes speak of the fulfillment of "all things" (τάδε πάντα; ταῦτα πάντα) just as they had promised ("even as I tell you"; "my words will not pass away"). Odysseus would return "in the course of this very month"; Jesus would return before the passing of "this generation." Furthermore, Jesus

predicted that at his return the sky would be dark,[7] which also has a parallel in Odysseus's speech to Penelope. "In the course of this very month shall Odysseus come here, between the waning of this moon and the waxing of the next"; in other words, when the moon is invisible.[8] Similarly, people will see "the Son of Man coming" when "the moon will not give its light."

Jesus then provides the following simile, which resonates unmistakably with the *Odyssey*. "It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come."[9] The vigilance of Odysseus's servants for his return is a dominating concern of the epic. Those who remained faithful and hopeful were rewarded, but the treacherous were executed.[10]

The strongest argument for Mark's borrowing from the epic, however, is the juxtaposition in both works of these privately uttered prophecies immediately before women anoint the heroes. Just after Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, prophesied to Penelope that her husband would soon return, she rewarded him with hospitality, commanding her maidservants:

> [C]ome, women, wash the stranger and make his bed,
> with bedding, blankets and lustrous spreads to keep him warm
> till Dawn comes up and takes her golden throne.
> Then, tomorrow at daybreak, bathe him well
> and rub him down with oil, so he can sit beside
> Telemachus in the hall, enjoy his breakfast there.[11]

Odysseus replied that he eschewed such extravagance and would not let her maidens touch him,

> unless, perhaps,
> there is some old retainer, the soul of trust,
> someone who's borne as much as I have borne . . .
> I wouldn't mind if *she* would touch my feet.[12]

In this request Odysseus had in mind his old nurse, Eurycleia, who would not mock his poverty as the younger women might.

Penelope, impressed by the stranger's preference for the austere, commented:

> [N]ever has any man
> so thoughtful—of all the guests in my palace
> come from foreign parts—been as welcome as you . . .
> so sensible, so apt, is every word you say.

She then commanded Eurycleia, "an old woman, seasoned, wise," to wash his feet. As the nurse approached, she lamented the sufferings of her long-lost master

and expressed her compassion also for the sufferings of the old beggar before her. "*I* will wash your feet,/ both for my own dear queen and for you yourself— / your sorrows wring my heart."[13]

> The old woman took up a burnished basin
> she used for washing feet and poured in bowls
> of fresh cold water before she stirred in hot.
> Odysseus, sitting full in the firelight, suddenly
> swerved round to the dark, gripped by a quick misgiving—
> soon as she touched him she might spot the scar!
> The truth would all come out.
> Bending closer
> she started to bathe her master . . . then,
> in a flash, she knew the scar.
> . . . . . .
> That scar—
> as the old nurse cradles his leg and her hands passed down
> she felt it, knew it, suddenly let his foot fall—
> down it dropped in the basin—the bronze clanged,
> tipping over, spilling water across the floor.
> Joy and torment gripped her heart at once,
> tears rushed to her eyes—voice choked in her throat
> she reached for Odysseus' chin and whispered quickly,
> "Yes, yes! you are *Odysseus*—oh dear boy—
> I couldn't know you before . . .
> not till I touched the body of my king!"[14]

Eurycleia wanted to tell Penelope of Odysseus's return, but he insisted she tell no one. The hero and his old nurse then discussed how to punish the unfaithful servants. The *Niptra* ends with Eurycleia finishing the job she had started, including an anointing. "[T]he old woman went off through the hall to bring water for his feet, for all the first was spilled. And when she had washed him, and anointed him richly with oil, Odysseus again drew his chair nearer to the fire to warm himself, and hid the scar with his rags."[15]

Both scenes of the *Niptra* (the beggar's predictions to Penelope and his recognition by Eurycleia) are important and memorable moments in the epic and, not surprisingly, often found expression in Greek art.[16] They surely were accessible to the earliest evangelist.

Furthermore, Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus from his scar became a popular target of imitation. A fascinating cas in point comes from the tragedians, who placed Orestes in a situation much like Odysseus's. Orestes wished to return home to avenge the murder of his father, Agamemnon, but had to do so in

disguise to avoid detection. The tragedians used several signs to alert Electra that her brother had returned. In this respect, she plays a role similar to Eurycleia's in the epic. Aeschylus has it that Electra went to the tomb of Agamemnon and found there a lock of hair that matched her own, which she took as certain proof that Orestes had returned.[17] There also was "another sign." Electra speaks:

> Footprints are here
> the feet that made them are alike, and look like mine. . . .
> I step
> where he has stepped, and heel marks, and the space between
> his heel and toe are like the prints I make.[18]

When Orestes revealed his identity to Electra, he showed her fabric she herself had woven.[19] The hair, the footprints, and the weaving function like Odysseus's scar, but ancient readers recognized the inadequacy of Aeschylus's forensic evidence.

When Sophocles turned to the same theme, he ridiculed these tokens. Electra's younger sister had gone to Agamemnon's tomb and claimed to have discovered "sure signs" of Orestes' presence: a newly cut strand of hair. Electra chided her naive sister, for even if the strand came from Orestes—which she seems willing to grant—someone else might have planted it at the tomb. When Orestes and Electra did connect, he demonstrated his identity by producing a surer sign, their father's seal.[20]

Euripides went Sophocles one better when describing the same scene. An old man told Electra he had discovered a lock of hair that matched hers at Agamemnon's tomb; ergo, Orestes must have been there. Electra ridiculed the very idea of a hair print. The elder added that there was another sign, a sandal print matching her own. Again she scoffed. The old man then asked if she had woven for him something that she would recognize if Orestes were wearing it, but she ridiculed this sign as well. She was but a child when Orestes fled and thus had not woven anything by then. Furthermore, what were the chances that Orestes would be wearing a child's cloak as a grown man, unless the cloak grew along with him?[21] In Euripides, Electra recognized Orestes not by these signs, as in Aeschylus, or by Agamemnon's seal, as in Sophocles, but by "a scar along his brow" from a wound inflicted when chasing a fawn.[22]

Aristotle considered Odysseus's scar one of the most successful signs for recognition in ancient Greek literature. In addition to discussing Aeschylus's *Libation Bearers*, he evaluated the role of recognitions in other tragedies, including several that no longer exist.[23]

Odysseus's scar also is recognizable in Greek prose. Achilles Tatius had his protagonist-narrator describe an adventure, much as Odysseus had to Alcinous,

replete with a voyage, a shipwreck, and a battle with pirates. As proof of his valor in battle he "showed them the scar" from a wound he suffered "on the thigh."[24] The novelist Heliodorus portrayed two lovers discussing the signs of recognition they would use if they should be separated. The heroine displayed her father's ring, while the hero showed "a scar upon his knee that he got hunting a boar."[25] Surely this is a hypertextual flag to the *Odyssey*.

The recognitions of Jesus from his wounds in Luke 24:39–43 and John 20:27–28 fall into this same tradition. It is no accident that the anonymous poet who recast the Gospel of John into dactylic hexameters used the Homeric word οὐλή when referring to Jesus' wounds of recognition.[26] Homer's description of Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus's scar generated mimetic offspring; among them was the anointing of Jesus by the unnamed woman in Mark 14. This comparison is all the more compelling in light of these analogous imitations.

At the beginning of chapter 14, Mark reminds the reader that "the high priests and scribes" kept seeking an opportunity to arrest and kill Jesus, just as the suitors had sought to kill Telemachus—and Odysseus if he were to return. Then one learns that Jesus' host in Bethany was Simon the leper, an ironically humble host for the disguised Son of God and a possible parallel to Eumaeus the swineherd, whose humble hut was home to Odysseus in disguise.

While Jesus was dining with the leper, "a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head."[27] Unlike Eurycleia, this woman did not wash and anoint the feet of the guest; she "poured down" a lavish amount of nard over his head. This transform anticipates Jesus' interpretation of her action as an anointing for his burial. She apparently recognized the one thing about Jesus that most eluded the disciples, the necessity of his death. Eurycleia, one may recall, lamented the sufferings of her master when she agreed to wash the beggar's feet. Both Homer and Mark emphasized the value of the oil: Eurycleia "anointed him richly with oil"; the woman at Bethany anointed Jesus with "very costly ointment of nard," which initiated the complaint of extravagance. The very excessiveness of the woman's action points to her anticipation of his death, for this was no ordinary act of hospitality; it resembles an extraordinary expression of grief for a departed loved one. Jesus' statement to the disciples suggests the woman knew he would not long be with them: "[Y]ou will not always have me with you." The evangelist enhances the extravagance of the woman's action by having her break the alabaster jar to release the oil. It may be more than coincidence that Eurycleia, when she recognized the beggar to be Odysseus, dropped the brass water basin to the ground, spilling its contents, like the woman's breaking of the jar to anoint Jesus.

The parallels between the *Niptra* and Jesus' anointing are striking. In both, a woman anointed a stranger as an act of hospitality while he sat in the home of his

host. The epic contrasts this hospitality with the hostility of the suitors and the treacherous servants. Mark contrasted the woman with the authorities, who sought to kill Jesus, with Judas, who would betray him, and with the disciples generally, who objected to this costly show of affection. In the epic and the Gospel, a woman either spilled a bowl or broke a jar. Both women made recognitions: Eurycleia recognized that the beggar was her lord; the woman in Mark recognized what others did not: Jesus soon would die. Odysseus discussed with Eurycleia the treachery of those servants who had sided with the suitors;[28] immediately after the anointing at Bethany, Mark says, "Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him."[29]

Once again, the parallels between the epic and the Gospel meet the criteria of density and order. Particularly telling is that the anointing takes place immediately after the prediction of the hero's return. Odysseus's predictions and Eurycleia's washing belong together in the epic. Penelope ordered the nurse to wash and anoint the feet of the beggar to show gratitude for his assurances about her husband. Furthermore, the predictions and the washing strategically mirror each other: Penelope failed to recognize the beggar as her husband, while Eurycleia did and was ordered to keep Penelope in the dark. Mark, on the other hand, does not indicate why the anointing follows the prophecies; no narratological glue binds them together. The juxtaposition is mimetic.

| *Odyssey* 19 | Mark 13:1–4 and 28–37 and 14:1–11 |
|---|---|
| Telemachus was amazed at the great light shining on the walls of his house. | One of Jesus' disciples was amazed at the great buildings in the temple area. |
| Odysseus went to Penelope and sat. | Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and sat. |
| Penelope, in private, questioned Odysseus. | Four of the disciples, in private, asked about the destruction of the temple. |
| Odysseus answered and gave her sure signs (σήματα) that he had seen her husband and that he would return. | Jesus answered and gave the sign (σημεῖον) when he would return. |
| Odysseus was consulting the sacred oak. | The disciples should consult the fig tree. |
| "He is very near." | "He is near." |
| "[A]ll these things shall be brought to pass [τάδε πάντα τελείεται]." | "until all these things have taken place [ταῦτα πάντα γένηται]." |
| | "It is like a man going on a journey. . . . Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come." |
| "Neither shall Odysseus any longer come." | |

After giving these prophecies, Odysseus,
disguised as a beggar, sat by himself.
Eurycleia came in with a bowl of water
and washed his feet;
later she "anointed him richly with oil."
She dropped the brass vessel to the ground,
spilling all the water.
She alone recognized her king.
Odysseus and Eurycleia discussed the
treachery of some of the servants
who sided with the suitors.

After giving these prophecies, Jesus sat at
table in the humble home of a leper.
A woman came in with an expensive
alabaster jar of ointment and poured
the oil on Jesus' head.
She broke the jar to release the oil.

She alone recognized that Jesus would die.
"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve,
went to the chief priests
in order to betray him to them."

Mark also retains details from the *Niptra* sufficiently distinctive to indicate imitation, such as the unusual consultation of a tree concerning the time of the hero's return. There is no parallel to this motif in Jewish literature. The consultation of the fig tree, then, may be a flag. Furthermore, Jesus praised the woman by saying, "[W]herever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her," yet Mark does not even give her a name. Some interpreters think the name did not survive the selective and androcentric memory of the early church. Be that as it may, no name would have been more fitting for her than Eurycleia, which means "far-flung glory." The significance of this name did not escape a scholiast: "Eurycleia (Εὐρύκλεια), she who had far-flung (εὐρύ) and great fame (κλέος), the daughter of Ops, 'looked upon from all sides'; 'Ops' is the eye."[30] The remarkable relevance of the name Eurycleia to the woman who anoints Jesus surely is no accident. It is a hypertextual flag.

Reading Mark against the *Niptra* also suggests possible emulation. Characteristic of most imitations of Eurycleia's recognition is the use of a sign — a scar, a lock of hair, a footprint, a garment, a seal. The woman in Mark had the benefit of no such sign, yet she recognized Jesus must die. In this respect she is like blind Bartimaeus, who recognized Jesus without a sign, in contrast to the disciples, who did not understand though Jesus had told them clearly and repeatedly that he must suffer and die. Eurycleia enjoyed "far-flung renown" for having recognized Odysseus from his scar, but her renown pales next to that of the woman who recognized that Jesus must die and accordingly anointed him: "[W]herever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her." She will have εὐρυκλέος.

# 15

## *Water Carriers*

After the unnamed woman anointed Jesus, and after Judas went off to betray him to the authorities, Mark narrates the unusual procurement of a location for observing the Passover. "[H]e sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal."[1] Mark does not narrate the execution of Jesus' orders, but the phrase they "found everything as he had told them" allows the reader to reconstruct what happened. The two disciples went off and entered the city, where a man carrying a jar of water met them. They followed him, and, when he entered a home, they said to the owner, "The Teacher asks, 'Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' " The owner showed them "a large room upstairs, furnished and ready." Then "they prepared the Passover meal."

Mark here transformed the famous woman-at-the-well type-scene. Typically, a male stranger arrives in a hostile or unknown area and meets a damsel drawing water, one of the few activities that found ancient women alone and away from

home. One function of such scenes is to provide the stranger accommodations in a foreign environment, perhaps on the assumption that meeting another male might produce not hospitality but hostility. Sometimes this type-scene emphasizes the boy-meets-girl potential of such encounters. The Book of Genesis exploits this romantic function in the encounters between Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Rachel, while Exodus emphasizes hospitality in the meeting of Moses and Zipporah, though without removing the romance altogether.[2] In 1 Sam. 9:11, Saul's engagement with the water-carrying girls, the romantic has completely given way to hospitality. The same topos appears in the Fourth Gospel in the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The evangelist suppresses the erotic in favor not merely of hospitality but also of inverted hospitality: Jesus offers the woman water that refreshes eternally. The erotic nonetheless is present in the woman's complex marital history.[3]

In transforming the scene of the woman at the well, Mark repressed the romantic in favor of the hospitable. The evangelist transformed the gender of the water carrier so that Jesus could demonstrate his powers of prediction. Anyone might have prophesied that the disciples would find a woman carrying water into the city, but only a clairvoyant could have prophesied a water-toting man.

The woman-at-the-well type-scene also appears in Homer, as in the encounter between Odysseus and Nausicaa, who had gone outside the city to a river with her friends not to draw water but to wash clothing. This transform was strategic insofar as Odysseus, cast ashore at the mouth of a river buck naked from days afloat at sea, would need clothing more than drink. The two typical functions of the type-scene, hospitality and romance, create a humorously delicate situation for Odysseus. If he hoped to get home, he would have to obtain hospitality from the island's natives, but he had no matrimonial designs on the maiden. He had to win her approval without overly fanning her enthusiasm.[4]

More directly relevant to the Passover in Mark is a passage from *Odyssey* 10. Odysseus and his crew sailed to an unfamiliar shore, so Odysseus sent a small search party ahead to investigate. "[I]n front of the city they met a girl drawing water, the stalwart daughter of Laestrygonian Antiphates, who had come down to the fair-flowing spring Artacia, from which they carried water to the town." They followed her home, but instead of finding hospitality or romance, they found a woman "huge as the peak of a mountain, and they were aghast at her."[5] She was queen of the cannibalistic Laestrygonians. Her husband, Antiphates, immediately began preparing one of Odysseus's crewmates for his supper. By using the familiar woman-at-the-well type-scene here, Homer intensified the monstrosity of the Laestrygonian feast. Instead of the usual hospitality, the reader finds anthropophagy.

Mark 14:13–16 more closely parallels *Odyssey* 10 than it does any biblical account.

| *Odyssey* 10.100–103 and 105–16 | Mark 14:13a–16 (arranged chronologically) |
|---|---|
| So then I *sent* forth *some of my comrades* to go and learn who the men were, who here ate bread upon the earth — | So he *sent* [to find a place for the Passover] |
| *two* [δύω] men I chose, and sent them a third as a herald. Now when they had gone ashore, *they went* along a smooth road. . . . And in front of *the city they met a girl drawing water,* the stalwart daughter of Laestrygonian Antiphates, who had come down to the fair-flowing spring Artacia, from which they *carried water to the town.* | *two* [δύο] *of his disciples.*<br>*They went* off and entered *the city.*<br>*A man met them*<br>who was *carrying a jar of water.* |
| So they came up to her and spoke to her, and *asked* her who was *king of this people,* and who they were of whom he was lord. | And they followed him, and when he entered, *they said* to *the owner of the house,* "The teacher *asks,* 'Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' " *He showed them* |
| And *she showed them* forthwith *the high-roofed house* of her father. Now when they entered the *glorious* house, *they found* [εὗρον] there his wife, huge as the peak of a mountain, and they were aghast at her. At once she called from the place of assembly the glorious Antiphates, her husband. . . . Instantly he seized one of my comrades *and made ready his meal.* | *a large room upstairs, furnished and ready.* Thus *they found* [εὗρον] everything as he had told them,<br>*and* they *prepared the Passover meal.* |

In both columns the hero sends two comrades (with a third as a messenger in Homer) to find hospitality, who meet someone fetching water and follow the water carrier home to a "high-roofed house" or "a large room upstairs." Odysseus's crew "found [εὗρον]" a gigantic ogre in the house; Jesus' disciples "found [εὗρον] everything as he [Jesus] had told them." The cannibal Antiphates and the disciples then prepared meals.

Mark surely would have had access to this tale, and Apollonius Rhodius provides an analogy in his imitation of the Laestrygonian episode.[6] Even though the episodes in the epic and the Gospel are brief, the parallels between them are dense and sequential.

| *Odyssey* 10.100–105 and 109–16 | Mark 14:13–16 |
| --- | --- |
| Odysseus sent two comrades (plus a herald) to seek out hospitality. | Jesus sent two disciples to seek out a guest room. |
| They went out and met a woman drawing water to take back to the city. | They went out and met a man carrying water back to the city. |
| The messengers asked questions and were shown a "high-roofed house." | The messengers asked questions and were shown an "upper room." |
| An ogre "made ready his meal." | The disciples readied the Passover. |

Mark also retains a feature distinctive to the *Odyssey*. In both accounts the following of the water carriers ends in a cannibalistic feast: the eating of Odysseus's companions and the symbolic eating of Jesus' body and blood. This similarity surely issues from mimesis, but it also exemplifies emulation. Odysseus's crew were helpless victims, whereas Jesus offered his body and blood willingly in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine. Whereas Odysseus and a few others saved their skins — literally — from the cannibalistic Laestrygonians, Jesus himself is the meal in Mark; he gave his body and blood for others. Despite this contrast, despite the cannibalism implicit in the Eucharist, Mark's identification of the Last Supper with cannibalism is brash and potentially repulsive. Later, Christian apologists repeatedly fended off pagan accusations of cannibalism, often arguing that pagans were more anthropophagic than they.[7] No such apologetic seems to be at work here in Mark; instead, the evangelist transvalues the devastation of the Laestrygonian meal into a meal of salvation.

# 16

## *Last Suppers before Hades*

The Last Supper was traditional prior to Mark, as is apparent from 1 Cor. 11:23–26, where Paul dates it to "the night when he [Jesus] was handed over" to die. In using the passive verb, "was handed over," Paul may have been thinking of Judas as its agent, but he might also have meant the Jewish authorities or even God. Even if Paul had Judas in mind, it remains unclear how much more he knew of a historical or traditional setting of the first Eucharist.

Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane that he might somehow avoid his execution may also rely on tradition. Hebrews refers to a prayer just prior to Jesus' death, though scholars dispute its relationship to prayers in the gospels. "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek."[1] Even if this passage reflects a tradition independent of the gospels (which I consider unlikely), one learns little concerning the context of the prayer. For example, details present in Mark find no correspondence in Hebrews: the setting after the Last Supper at night in Gethsemane, the sleeping of the disciples, and the subsequent arrest. For this reason, some interpreters think the author of Hebrews had in mind a prayer from the

cross as in Mark 15:34 and Matt. 27:46.[2] Others have tried to isolate a pre-Marcan source behind 14:17–52, but these attempts seldom agree with each other and have found little support.

As it now stands, this section of the Gospel is heavily indebted to Jewish scriptures, probably through Mark's own composition. For example, Ps. 41:9 (LXX 40:10) may have informed 14:18–20 concerning Judas: "Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me." Jesus himself alludes to Zech. 13:7: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (14:27). Zechariah 9–14, some have argued, supplied Mark with motifs he used throughout Jesus' last days in Jerusalem. His cry of despair (14:34) echoes several possible scriptures.[3] These scriptural antecedents, however, fall short of explaining most of the literary features of 14:17–52. "Mark is not merely the redactor, but to a high degree the creator and composer of the Gethsemane story."[4]

No one seems to have noticed the similarities between these episodes and the end of *Odyssey* 10, Odysseus's last supper with Circe before sailing to Hades.[5] Just as Odysseus and his crew prepared to leave Circe's island, the witch provided them a feast. After eating food and drinking wine, Odysseus's crew fell asleep. "[W]hen the sun set and darkness came on, they lay down to sleep throughout the shadowy hall."[6] Just prior to his death, Jesus, too, had a last meal with his disciples, and they, too, were drowsy after food and wine. Despite Jesus' command that they stay awake, Peter, James, and John fell asleep three times. While their associates slept, Odysseus and Jesus both stayed awake. Odysseus "went up to the beautiful bed of Circe" and asked her to send him on his way. Jesus went off by himself to pray.

*Odyssey* 10.480–84

[B]ut *I went up to the*
beautiful *bed of Circe and besought*
*her* by her knees; and the goddess heard
my voice, and *I spoke,* and addressed her
with winged words: "*Circe*
[Cf. 10.306: "(T)he gods can do anything
(πάντα δύνανται)."],
fulfill for me the promise which you
gave to send me home."

Mark 14:35–36

And *going a little farther,* he *threw himself*
*on the ground and prayed* that
if possible, the hour might pass from him.
*He said,*
*Abba, Father,*
for you all things are possible
[πάντα δυνατά σοι];
remove this cup from me."

Circe consented to send Odysseus home, but he must "first complete another journey," he must go to Hades to consult the blind prophet Tiresias.[7] When he heard this, he wanted to die. Jesus needed no witch to tell him his fate, but he, too, despaired of life.

*Odyssey* 10.496–502

[A]nd *my spirit was broken* within me,
and I *wept* as I sat on the bed, *nor had my*
*heart any longer desire to live* and behold
the light of the sun. But when I had had
my fill of *weeping and writhing,* then I
made answer, and addressed her, *saying:*
"Who, *Circe,* will guide us on this
journey? To Hades no man ever yet went."

Mark 14:33b–36a

[Jesus] began to be *distressed* and *agitated.*
And he said to them,
"*My soul* is
*deeply grieved even unto death. . . .*[8]
And going a little farther, he *threw himself*
*on the ground* and prayed that if it were
possible, the hour might pass from him. He
*said,* "*Abba,* Father, . . . remove this cup
from me."

During their conversation, Circe gave Odysseus whatever encouragement she could, promising, for instance, that he would return from the dead. Odysseus and Jesus both resigned themselves to their fates.

Resolutely, Odysseus mustered his men. Jesus mustered too.

*Odyssey* 10.546–50

But *I went* through the halls, and roused
my men *with winning words,* coming up
to each man in turn: "Although *you are*
*sleeping* [εὕδοντες], no longer *take your*
*fill of sweet sleep,*

but *let us go; lo!*
queenly Circe has told me all."
*So I spoke,* and their proud hearts
consented.

Mark 14:41–43a

*He came* a third time
*and said* to them,
"*You are* still *sleeping* [καθεύδετε]
*and taking your rest!* Enough!
The hour has come; the Son of Man
is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
Get up, *let us be going. See*
my betrayer is at hand."
Immediately, *while he was still speaking,*
Judas, one of the twelve, arrived.

Surely these parallels suggest textual contact. After spending much of the night lamenting their fates, both heroes woke their sleeping companions, using a verb in the second-person plural and a verb or a participle with the root εὐδ-. Both heroes then use a verb meaning "to go" in first-person-plural subjunctive, "let us go," followed by the reason for departing.

In both works, after waking their comrades the heroes departed for the world of the dead. Odysseus sailed for Hades to consult blind Tiresias. Jesus went off to his trials and then to the cross. Both Odysseus and Jesus returned from Hades alive. Circe noted that Odysseus had "gone down alive to the house of Hades to meet death twice, while other men die but once."[9] Mark narrates no event while Jesus was dead, but according to later tradition, including the Apostles' Creed, "he descended to the dead; on the third day he rose again," and several texts

omnisciently insist that he preached in hell.[10] In Mark, too, Jesus visited with the dead, not during his three days in the tomb but at the Transfiguration.

The parallels between *Odyssey* 10 and Mark 14 clearly are dense and sequential. On the eve of their departures for Hades, both heroes ate last suppers with their comrades, after which the comrades slept while the heroes stayed awake and agonized over their fates. Both then mustered their sleeping comrades and departed.

To be sure, feasting and sleeping before journeys are common in ancient writings; these and other similarities obviously do not require mimesis. The same is not the case, however, with the heroes staying awake all night agonizing over their journeys to the realm of the dead. The most distinctive trait retained by Mark is Homer's subtle irony in 10.497–98. When Odysseus learned that he must go "to the house of Hades and dread Persephone," he lost all interest in living: "[N]or had my heart any longer desire to live and behold the light of the sun." One commentator has noted that Odysseus "wishes to go to Hades, just at the moment when he is ordered, to his horror, to go to Hades. The irony is quite intentional"—intentional and distinctive.[11] Mark retains the same irony: Jesus is "deeply grieved even unto death" at Gethsemane because he knows he must die at Golgotha.[12]

Mark's dependence on Homer also explains a famous difficulty in the Gethsemane scene. Mark's narrator had been omniscient throughout the narrative, and here he dares to repeat Jesus' most private prayer to his Father while his disciples slept.[13] The suggestion that the drowsy disciples heard Jesus' utterances just before nodding off is historicizing hogwash. The disciples had not overheard Jesus—Mark imitated Homer, who had dared to record Odysseus's pillow talk with Circe their last night together. Unlike Mark, the poet had a trustworthy source for this conversation: Odysseus himself narrated it. "So I spoke. . . . So she spoke, and my spirit was broken within me."[14]

Mark's recasting of the end of Book 10 also suggests emulation. Odysseus spent his last night in Circe's bedroom learning of his fate; Jesus spent his last night alone in prayer, already aware that he must die. Furthermore, Odysseus did not actually die when he visited Hades; Jesus did, but was raised to life again.

We now come to one of the most enigmatic characters of Mark's Gospel, and one that yields itself magnificently to a Homeric resolution. After Jesus woke the sleeping disciples, Judas arrived with a hostile crowd "from the highpriests and scribes and elders." Judas betrayed Jesus with an ironic kiss, and when the authorities seized Jesus, the disciples "deserted him and fled." One then reads: "And a certain young man was following him wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked."[15] Neither Matthew nor Luke knew what to make of this mysterious, naked youth, for each,

independently, removed every vestige of him. Interpreters from antiquity to the present have been generous with suggestions concerning his identity, but he remains one of the greatest conundrums in the New Testament.[16]

In 1974 Morton Smith published a putative letter by Clement of Alexandria that includes two variant readings of the Gospel of Mark, the first of which narrates the resuscitation of a "young man" who came to Jesus at night "wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness," language identical to that of 14:51.[17] This lad clearly has something to do with the similarly sartorially deprived youth at Jesus' arrest, though scholars squabble over the precise nature of that relationship. Smith himself attributed the passage to a pre-Marcan Aramaic source used by Mark, who omitted the reference to the raising of the youth but retained a reminiscence of him in 14:51–52. Later, a scribe, on the basis of Mark's alleged Aramaic source, reinserted the missing episode into the text after 10:34. Other scholars have attributed the fragment to Mark's earliest textual stratum and claimed that our "Canonical Mark" was purged of it.[18]

Several arguments tell against this hypothesis, including the way Mark introduces the young man in 14:51: "And a certain [τις] young man was following him."[19] The normal narrative usage of the indefinite pronoun τις is to refer to a character who had not earlier been introduced. If the evangelist had already mentioned this lad in chapter 10, one might have expected him to write something like "the young man whom Jesus had raised." Some who argue for the originality of the fragments cited by Clement suggest that the redactor of "Canonical Mark" skillfully removed all traces of his appearance not only by omitting the disputed variants but also by inserting τις in 14:51 as though introducing a new character. The phrase "was following him" probably was added at this late stage as well; it would be superfluous if the reader had already read fragment one.

A more likely antecedent for Mark's naked young man comes from Homer—the same Elpenor that Luke imitated in his depiction of Eutychus. In chapter 11 I discussed this example of mimesis not only in Acts but also in Plato, Vergil, Plutarch, and Apuleius. These texts demonstrate that the tale was a popular target for imitation and emulation. The tale thus was accessible to Mark, and his imitation had several analogies, even a narrative by another evangelist.

After Odysseus had spent the night in Circe's bedroom learning he must go to Hades, and immediately after the hero roused his men to be off to the netherworld, Homer introduced "a certain [τις]" young man named Elpenor.

> There was a certain Elpenor, the youngest in our ranks,
> none too brave in battle, none too sound in mind.
> He'd strayed from his mates in Circe's magic halls
> and keen for the cool night air,
> sodden with wine he'd bedded down on her roofs.

> But roused by the shouts and tread of marching men,
> he leapt up with a start at dawn but still so dazed
> he forgot to climb back down again by the long ladder—
> headfirst from the roof he plunged, his neck snapped
> from the backbone, his soul flew down to Death.[20]

Elpenor's soul would be the first to greet Odysseus when he arrived in Hades.

Mark's introduction of the scantily clad lad is similar to Homer's introduction of Elpenor.

| *Odyssey* 10.552–53 (Fagles 608–9) | Mark 14:51 |
|---|---|
| There was *a certain* Elpenor, the *youngest* in our ranks [Ἐλπήνωρ δέ τις ἔσκε νεώτατος], none too brave in battle. | And *a certain young man* [καὶ νεανίσκος τις] was following him wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness. |

Each column contains a conjunction with the indefinite pronoun τις and calls the character a youth in the nominative case (νεώτατος/νεανίσκος: "youngest"/"young man"). Furthermore, Homer and Mark both introduce the characters abruptly, with no preparation, even though both lads had accompanied the heroes for some time. Mark's use of the imperfect, "was following," suggests that the young man had been closely related to Jesus in the past, as was the case with Elpenor, who had sailed with Odysseus from Troy. These parallels suggest that the pronoun τις was original to the Gospel, not a later corruption.

When Elpenor awoke, still groggy from Circe's wine, he forgot where he was sleeping and fell to his death: his soul, "leaving his body behind, flew down to Hades."[21] At Jesus' arrest, the young man "left the linen cloth and ran away naked." Like Elpenor, he was "none too brave." Artistic representations of Elpenor are rare, but the Boston Museum of Fine Arts displays a vase from the Lykaon Painter (ca. 440 B.C.E.) in which a seated and bearded Odysseus, clad in a draped chlamys, welcomes the soul of Elpenor as it emerges from the netherworld. The lad's left arm reaches upward while his feet are still planted in the earth; he is smooth-chinned and, more relevant to Mark, entirely nude. The artist depicted him naked to illustrate his soul's deprivation of a body, which he had left behind at Circe's island.

It is impossible to know if Mark knew of artistic depictions of Elpenor naked; even if he did not, the nakedness of the youth at Jesus' arrest corresponds to the flight of Elpenor's soul. The equation of the body with a garment was an ancient cliché.[22] The body/garment metaphor also was popular among ancient Christians even before Mark: Paul, for example, objected to it.[23] The garment the youth left behind thus may symbolize the flight of the naked soul from the body; if so, it corresponds to the flight of Elpenor's soul to Hades. A later chapter will

compare the burial of Elpenor's corpse with the appearance of a young man at the tomb. Mark will emulate Homer, replacing death with resurrection.

One might illustrate the density and order of parallels discussed in this chapter with the following columns. Several of the shared details also are distinctive.

| *Odyssey* 10.476–560 | Mark 14:17–52 |
|---|---|
| Circe provided Odysseus and his crew a bountiful meal, including wine. | Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover, including wine. |
| After the meal, while his crew slept, Odysseus spent the night with Circe asking her to send him on his way, but he did not anticipate a journey to Hades. | After the meal, while his disciples slept, Jesus spent evening time in prayer asking for the "cup" to pass from him, viz., his death. |
| Odysseus learned he had to go to Hades; he wept and despaired of life. Even so, Odysseus resigned himself to his fate. | Jesus knew he had to die and was distressed "unto death." Even so, Jesus resigned himself to his fate. |
| Odysseus came to his sleeping crew and woke them. "Although you are sleeping, no longer take your fill of sweet sleep, but let us go." | Jesus came to his sleeping disciples and woke them. "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! . . . [L]et us be going." |
| "There was a certain Elpenor, the youngest [νεώτατος] . . . , none too brave." | "A certain young man [νεανίσκος] was following him," who ran when the authorities arrested Jesus. |
| Elpenor died and his soul fled to Hades. | A young man fled naked, leaving his shroud. |
| Odysseus sailed to Hades and returned. | Jesus died and returned from the dead. |

# 17

## *Death Predictions*

Like the *Odyssey,* the *Iliad* spawned imitations: Apollonius's *Argonautica,* Statius's *Thebaid,* Silius Italicus's *Punica,* and, of course, Vergil's *Aeneid.* Epic poets competed to complete Homer's story after the burial of Hector, such as the authors of the so-called Epic Cycle (especially *Aithiopis, Little Iliad,* and *Iliou Persis*), and Quintus Smyrnaeus, poet of the *Posthomerica.*[1] Tragedians repeatedly fulfilled Homer's predictions of the fall of Troy and the nostoi of Greeks. Prose authors, too, imitated the epic: for example, Pseudo-Dictys and Pseudo-Dares. Papyri from Egyptian schools leave little doubt that paraphrasing the *Iliad* was a common compositional assignment. This chapter and the next three argue that Mark transvalued the *Iliad,* as he had the *Odyssey.*

Whereas the *Odyssey* told of a single hero, the *Iliad* told of two: the Greek Achilles and the Trojan Hector. Hector is Achilles' alter ego—as Hector dies he even wears the armor of Achilles, stripped from the corpse of Patroclus—but the two champions represent contrasting heroic types. Although Achilles unquestionably is the mightier, Hector is the nobler.[2] Achilles earns the reader's awe; Hector, sympathy. Achilles fights far from home—an only child, unwed, and fiercely independent. His fanatical and ferocious wrath is the announced focus of the epic, a wrath that will not subside until he has avenged the death of his beloved Patroclus. Without Achilles, the Achaeans could not take Troy, and, when he finally entered the war, he routed the Trojan army almost single-handedly.

Not so with Hector. "Perhaps the main difference between the two heroes is that Hektor is represented as quintessentially social and human, while Achilles is inhumanly isolated and daemonic in his greatness."[3] Hector is socially rooted, devoted to his parents (Priam and Hecuba), faithful to his many brothers, loving to his wife (Andromache), tender to his son (Astyanax), accepting of his sister-in-law (Helen), protective of the women of Troy, and sole defender of the city. "Hector is by nature a peaceful, home-loving, gentle, family man who is trapped by circumstances into the role of the heroic defender of Troy."[4] He also was a favorite of the gods, as Zeus himself reveals:

> [T]he immortals loved Prince Hector dearly,
> best of all the mortals born in Troy . . .
> so I loved him, at least:
> he never stinted with gifts to please my heart.
> Never once did my altar lack its share of victims,
> winecups tipped and deep smoky savor.[5]

He was "dear to the gods" and nearly "a god among men—no son of a mortal man, / he seemed a deathless god's."[6]

The epic at first focuses on Achilles but ends focused on Hector. "Achilles is the great hero of the *Iliad,* and the *Iliad* is the story of the death of a hero; but Achilles does not die in the *Iliad.* The death of Achilles—or rather, his mortality—is a ruling fatality of the *Iliad,* but the pathos of the poem is concentrated in the death of Hector."[7] The poet creates pathos for Hector by highlighting the disparity between his untarnished nobility and the tragic inevitability of his death. Readers pity him because he deserves far better than having to sacrifice his life for his brother's abduction of Helen.

As we shall see, Mark's Jesus repeatedly imitates Hector, but in Jesus' predictions of his death, he has more in common with Achilles.[8] Scholars of the earliest gospel long have recognized the passion predictions as one of the evangelist's most important and distinctive contributions to traditional memories of Jesus. His mentor here, as in so much else, was Homer.

The bard predicted the deaths of both heroes throughout the epic, but these predictions function in dramatically different ways. First, Achilles. Despite his unparalleled strength, the Greek champion would never return from Troy alive; he knew it and willingly accepted his fate in exchange for eternal renown, and his resolve to pursue the war despite his anticipation of his death enhances his stature as the best of the Achaeans. Similarly, Jesus' resolve to go to Jerusalem despite his knowledge that he will die there testifies to his courage. These parallels merit elaboration.

Already in Book 1, Achilles told his mother, Thetis, that his life would be

short,[9] and other characters reminded him of it repeatedly. For example, Achilles told the embassy sent to him by Agamemnon that Thetis had warned him,

> [T]wo fates bear me on to the day of death.
> If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy,
> my journey home is gone, but my glory never dies.
> If I voyage back to the fatherland I love,
> my pride, my glory dies . . .
> true, but the life that's left me will be long,
> the stroke of death will not come on me quickly.[10]

For Achilles there was no doubt which fate was preferable: a short life with eternal fame.[11]

Like the reader of the *Iliad,* the reader of Mark knows the hero will die prematurely. Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus as early as 3:6, after seeing him heal on the sabbath. He was in danger of suffering a fate like that of John the Baptist, and he himself predicted his execution three times.[12] Despite his knowledge that he would die violently in Jerusalem, he resolutely continued his journey there. He hoped to avoid the cup of death, but he was willing to die if it were God's will. Like Homer in his depiction of Achilles, Mark established Jesus' courage by having him proceed on his mission fully aware that it would cost him his life. Whereas Achilles' death was compensated with renown, Jesus' will be compensated with resurrection and the proclamation of the good news.

Homer predicted the death of Hector as well, but these predictions function differently. Hector was no physical match for Achilles, so the gods frequently had to intervene to save him. This divine solicitude fed Hector's one fatal flaw: his unrealistic optimism. Hector was courageous not because he accepted his death willingly, like Achilles, but because he was under the illusion that he could somehow carry the day. When he foresaw defeat, he fled.[13] Andromache told him that the Achaeans soon would slay him, and he himself knew "the day will come when sacred Troy must die,/ Priam must die and all his people with him," but he remained hopeful of repulsing the Greeks and roused his troops with such fantasies.[14]

> Come,
> now for attack! We'll set all this to rights,
> someday, if Zeus will ever let us raise
> the winebowl of freedom high in our halls,
> high to the gods of cloud and sky who live forever—
> once we drive these Argives geared for battle out of Troy![15]

The narrator, however, leaves no doubt that Hector soon will die.[16] As Patroclus gasped his last breath, he predicted Hector's imminent demise, but the Trojan still dreamed an impossible dream:

> Why, Patroclus —
> why prophesy my doom, my sudden death? Who knows? —
> Achilles the son of sleek-haired Thetis may outrace me —
> struck by *my* spear first — and gasp away his life![17]

When he contemplated whether to stand up to Achilles, Hector knew that his excessive optimism had complicated Troy's plight, but he still hoped to prevail.[18] Standing his ground with Deiphobus presumably at his side, he again thought he might slay Achilles, and only when Deiphobus vanished did Hector recognize defeat.

Hector's unrealistic optimism despite information to the contrary resembles Mark's depiction of the Twelve. After each of the three passion predictions, the disciples ignored or denied the inevitability of Jesus' death. After the first such prediction, "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' "[19] After the second prediction, the narrator reveals that the Twelve "did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask." Later Jesus learned that "on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest," apparently another denial of doom.[20] After the third passion prediction, James and John asked Jesus, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory," an outrageous display of incomprehension.[21]

The Twelve lost their starch when it became clear that the authorities would succeed in killing their master. At his arrest, all fled. Peter, despite his intention to die with Jesus, denied knowing him three times. James and John claimed they were able to drink from Jesus' cup and be baptized with his baptism, but they, too, were nowhere to be found when he met his end. They, like Hector, were faithful only as long as their optimism ruled. When confronted with the reality of death, they wilted. On the other hand, Jesus, like Achilles, was courageous despite the certainty of his death at the hands of his foes. Mark's strategic disparity between Jesus' courage in the face of death and the disciples' Pollyanna denial and ultimate cowardice may be an artful recycling of the passion predictions of Achilles and Hector.

# 18

## *Violent Deaths*

Mark 14–16, the so-called Passion Narrative, is the longest continuous story in the Gospel. Several studies have argued that Mark inherited a written source narrating Jesus' death, but the proposed reconstructions vary dramatically, and none has gained wide acceptance.[1] In fact, many scholars deny the very existence of such a source insofar as these chapters display typical Marcan style and weave into an intricate tapestry themes present already in chapters 1–13.[2] The Passion Narrative is an artful and fitting conclusion to the Gospel as a whole.

Although Mark probably did not recast an antecedent Passion Narrative, he clearly generated some of his story from Jewish scriptures. Mark 14–16 "is suffused with Old Testament citations and allusions to an extent unparalleled in the rest of his narrative, a frequency that reflects the primitive Christian conviction that Christ died and was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (see 1 Cor. 15:3–4)."[3]

Despite this influence of Jewish scriptures, these texts *eis ipsis* cannot account for the Passion Narrative as we have it. The earliest evangelist probably had some literary model in mind into which he integrated these scriptural allusions, and proposed models have included Plato's account of the death of Socrates, Greek tragedies, and Jewish martyrdoms. Earlier chapters of this book argued that Mark modeled several passages in the Passion Narrative after passages in the *Odyssey:* Jesus' anointing by the woman in Bethany, the disciples' following a

water carrier to the upper room for the Passover, Judas's betrayal, Jesus' agony as the disciples slept at Gethsemane, the flight of the naked young man at the arrest, Barabbas as an ironic counterhero, and Jesus' revelation of his identity before the high priest. The previous chapter proposed that the passion predictions function much like the predictions of the deaths of Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad*. Chapter 20 will compare Joseph's burial of Jesus with Priam's burial of Hector, and chapter 21 will contrast the tombs of Hector and Elpenor with the empty tomb of Jesus. In other words, Mark seems to have created much of the Passion Narrative in imitation of Homeric epic. The same holds true for his lapidary narration of the crucifixion in 15:20b–41, which he seems to have modeled after the death of Hector in *Iliad* 22, the topic of this chapter.

Achilles routed the Trojans, driving them into the city, all but Hector, who, despite the pleadings of Priam and Hecuba, stayed outside the walls to challenge the Greek champion in hopes that Olympus once again would grant him victory. In the past, Zeus had inspired him for war, thwarted attempts to kill him, and granted the Trojan hero victory and glory. Agamemnon complained that Hector could not have killed so many Achaeans without the help of Zeus.[4] Hector's most consistent Olympian ally was Apollo, who raised the hero after he was toppled by a boulder, averted a Greek arrow, and provided him a helmet to stay a hostile spear, prompting Diomedes to complain, "Now, again, your Phoebus Apollo pulls you through."[5]

According to Book 15, Zeus instructed Apollo to "make glorious Hector your main concern, / rouse his breakneck courage."[6] Apollo did so and assured Hector of Zeus's patronage as well:

> Courage!
> Look what a strong support the son of Cronos
> speeds from Ida to take your side and shield you—
> I am Phoebus Apollo, lord of the golden sword!
> I who saved you before, and along with you
> your towering city too.[7]

Apollo then fought at Hector's side and granted him several successes.[8]

Without divine help, Hector could not have slain Patroclus, who entered the fray with near superhuman ferocity. The dying Patroclus rightly attributed his fall not to Hector but to the work of the gods.

> A gift from the son of Cronos, Zeus — Apollo too —
> they brought me down with all their deathless ease,
> *they* are the ones who tore the armor off my back.
> Even if twenty Hectors had charged against me —
> they'd all have died here, laid low by my spear.
> No, deadly fate in league with Apollo killed me.[9]

In Book 20 Achilles charged Hector only to have Apollo snatch him away and shroud him in an impenetrable mist.[10] With such a history of divine protection, Hector had reason to hope for a victory against Achilles.

But when he saw his opponent in the armor Hephaestus had made for him, Hector fled, racing around Troy three times. Zeus again considered coming to his rescue, because of Hector's piety, but Athena protested and got her way.[11] In one last act of benefaction, Apollo gave Hector strength to outrun Achilles, but only until Zeus raised his dread scales.

> [T]hen Father Zeus held out his sacred golden scales:
> in them he placed two fates of death that lays men low—
> one for Achilles, one for Hector breaker of horses—
> and gripping the beam mid-haft the Father raised it high
> and down went Hector's day of doom, dragging him down
> to the strong House of Death—and Phoebus Apollo left him.[12]

Once Hector's gods had forsaken him, his defeat was certain.

The preliminaries of Mark's account of the crucifixion have little to do with the events leading up to the death of Hector. Mark crafted his detailed mise-en-scène of the crucifixion to develop themes present earlier in the Gospel. Other elements of the setting derive from biblical antecedents.[13] Even so, the situations of both heroes are similar. Hector's troops had fled into Troy, leaving him to face his end alone. Jesus' disciples, too, had fled, abandoning him. More explicit borrowings from the *Iliad* begin with the taunts of the bystanders.

### *Taunts*

Athena appeared to Hector disguised as his brother Deiphobus, promising to fight at his side against the Achaean hero. Emboldened by Deiphobus's promise of help, Hector turned to face his foe and began the duel with a taunt. Achilles answered with a taunt of his own, predicting that "Athena will kill you with my spear in just a moment."[14] He then threw his spear but missed, prompting another taunt from Hector.

> You missed, look—the great godlike Achilles!
> So you knew nothing at all from Zeus about my death—
> and yet how sure you were! All bluff, cunning with words,
> that's all you are—trying to make me fear you,
> lose my nerve, forget my fighting strength.
> Well, you'll never plant your lance in my back
> as I flee *you* in fear—plunge it through my chest
> as I come charging in, if a god gives you the chance!
> But now it's for you to dodge *my* brazen spear—
> I wish you'd bury in it your body to the hilt.[15]

This taunt contains features typical of taunts elsewhere in the *Iliad*.[16] Hector acknowledged Achilles' nobility ("great godlike Achilles"), which may strike modern readers as odd, but in Homer the exaltation of one's opponent emphasized the taunter's bravery and, if victorious, his might.[17] Hector claimed that Achilles' earlier boast of victory was nothing but bluster intended to intimidate; heroic taunts frequently call bluffs.[18] Hector invited Achilles to slay him, "if a god gives you the chance," an example of provocation characteristic of other taunts, often expressed in a defiant, imperative mood.[19] Finally, Hector expressed his hopes for victory: "But now it's for you to dodge *my* brazen spear — / I wish you'd bury it in your body to the hilt."[20] Hector did not yet know that his gods had abandoned him. The irony of Hector's taunt soon will become obvious even to him: his spear bounced off Achilles' shield, but Achilles' spear hit its mark: "[T]he point went stabbing clean through the tender neck."[21] The threat of the taunt ricocheted back against the taunter, yet another feature of epic battle banter.[22]

According to Mark, as Jesus hung on the cross, "Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! Destroyer of the temple and builder of it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' "[23] In Homer the shaking of one's head symbolized pity or hostile defiance; it always anticipated disaster.[24] Here in Mark one finds several conventions of heroic taunts: the address of the foe with an honorific title ("Destroyer of the temple"); the calling of Jesus' bluff about his powers with an imperative that he escape death if possible ("come down from the cross!"); and poetic irony — by consenting to the crucifixion of Jesus, the passersby were indirectly destroying the temple.[25] Their taunt against Jesus would boomerang.

The second taunt in Mark comes from "the chief priests, along with the scribes," who "were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' "[26] Here again one finds the use of titles ("the Messiah, the King of Israel"), the calling of Jesus' bluff ("he saved others, but he cannot save himself"), the imperative provocation ("come down from the cross now"), and irony. Jesus was indeed "the Messiah, the King of Israel," but not a king recognizable to his executors. Furthermore, by not saving himself from the cross he was saving others; if he had followed the advice of his taunters and saved himself, he could not have saved others. "Those who were crucified with him also taunted him."

Usually those taunted in the *Iliad* throw taunts back, but occasionally they remain silent and let their weapons do the talking. The most effective response to a taunt is a lethal blow.[27] Mark's Jesus responds with neither a taunt nor a blow, yet the reader by now knows that Jesus' resurrection and the eventual destruction of the temple will vindicate him.

Of course, Homer had no monopoly on taunt ; they appear frequently in ancient texts, including the Hebrew Bible. The point to be made here is merely that the taunting of Jesus in Mark conforms with conventions of taunting in the *Iliad,* including the taunts preceding the death of Hector. Proof of direct imitation must await the application of our criteria.

### *Abandonments by Gods and Allies*

After Hector shouted his taunt against Achilles, he let fly his spear, but it caused no harm. He needed another weapon.

> So Hector shouted out
> to Deiphobus bearing his white shield — with a ringing shout
> he called for a heavy lance —
> but the man was nowhere near him,
> vanished —
> yes and Hector knew the truth in his heart
> and the fighter cried aloud, "My time has come!
> at last the gods have called me down to death.
> I thought he was at my side, the hero Deiphobus—
> he's safe inside the walls, Athena's tricked me blind.
> And now death, grim death is looming up beside me,
> no longer far away. No way to escape it now. This,
> this was their pleasure after all, sealed long ago —
> Zeus and the son of Zeus, the distant deadly Archer
> though often before now they rushed to my defense.
> So now I meet my doom.[28]

This, at last, is Hector's moment of recognition: when his brother did not appear, he knew his gods had forsaken him.

Even so, the Trojan hero rushed against the Greek, but Achilles drove his spear through his exposed neck. Hector's last utterance was a prediction that his enemy would die at the hands of Paris and Apollo. "Even as he spoke, the end of death engulfed him, and his soul, flying from his limbs, went off to Hades."[29]

Now for Mark. Following the taunts, one reads: "When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon."[30] Like a thunderbolt by Zeus in Homeric epic, this cosmic darkness during the most brilliant hours of the day symbolized God's abandonment of Jesus, prompting him to say, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[31] This utterance obviously cites the first line of Psalm 22, but it also resemble Hector's recognition that Zeus and Apollo had abandoned him. Both heroes soliloquize their dooms.

| *Iliad* 22.296–97 and 301–3 (Fagles 350–51 and 356–58) | Mark 15:34 |
|---|---|
| *Hector . . . cried aloud* [φώνησεν]. . . . At last *the gods* have called me down to death. . . . [T]his was their pleasure after all . . . *Zeus and the son of Zeus* . . . though often before now they rushed to my defense. [Cf. 22.213: "Apollo *left* (λίπεν) *him*" (Hector).] | *Jesus cried out with a loud voice* [φωνῇ], . . . "My *God*, my *God*, why have you *forsaken me* [ἐγκατέλιπές με]?" |

Jesus quotes Psalm 22 in a transliteration of the Aramaic, permitting a brilliant—if etymologically forced—pun. Some at the cross took his cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani" as an appeal for Elijah to rescue him. They thought Jesus was calling for help, just as Hector had called for Deiphobus.

| *Iliad* 22.294–95 (Fagles 346–49) | Mark 15:35 |
|---|---|
| So *Hector shouted to Deiphobus* . . . with a ringing voice he called for a heavy lance—but the man was nowhere near him, vanished. | When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, *he is calling for Elijah*." . . . "[L]et's see if Elijah comes to take him down. [Elijah was nowhere to be found.] |

Compare also the deaths of the two heroes.

| *Iliad* 22.362–63 | Mark 15:37 |
|---|---|
| [A]nd *his soul* [ψυχή], flying from his limbs, went *to Hades, bewailing her fate.* | Then Jesus *gave a loud cry* and *expired* [ἐξέπνευσεν].[32] |

Obviously some of these parallels could be attributed to accident or to stock features of heroic deaths, but when seen collectively they suggest mimesis. In both deaths, gods who once protected the heroes forsook them, and each hero lamented his abandonment in a pathetic soliloquy. In the *Iliad*, Hector called for help from Deiphobus; in Mark, bystanders interpreted Jesus' cry of dereliction as a call for help from Elijah; in neither case did the ally appear. Each hero faced his fate alone, abandoned by gods and cohorts. Hector's soul departed for Hades; Jesus expired, literally, sent out his breath or spirit.

### *The Deaths of Heroes and the Falls of Cities*

According to the earliest gospel, when Jesus died, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."[33] With this master stroke of irony Mark suggests that the Jewish authorities, by killing Jesus, whom they falsely accused

of plotting against the temple, themselves doomed it to destruction.[34] The death of Jesus thus is intimately linked with the fall of Jerusalem.

Similarly, the *Iliad* links the death of a hero to the destruction of a city.[35] Insofar as Hector alone stood between the Achaeans and Troy's collapse, no sooner had he died than the Trojans mourned for him, "just as if" their entire city had gone up in flames.

> Pitifully his loving father groaned and round the king
> his people cried with grief and wailing seized the city —
> for all the world as if all Troy, looming above a ridge,
> were torched and smoldering from top to bottom.[36]

The phrase translated here "from top to bottom" is κατ' ἄκρης, used only four times in the epic, always in connection with the fall of Troy.[37] Similarly, when Jesus died, the veil of the sanctuary was rent "from top to bottom [ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω]."[38] This phrase, together with the passive verb "was rent," points to God as the cause of the rip.

When Andromache learned of the death of her husband, she cried: "[I]t was you, Hector, you and you alone / who shielded the gates and long walls of Troy."[39] She repeated this theme in her lament at Hector's funeral, and here again one encounters the phrase "from top to bottom."

> I cannot think that he [Astyanax] will ever come to manhood.
> Long before *that* the city will be sacked,
> plundered top to bottom [κατ' ἄκρης]! Because you are dead,
> her great guardian, you who always defended Troy,
> who kept her loyal wives and helpless children safe,
> all who will soon be carried off in the hollow ships
> and I with them.[40]

"The death of Hector means . . . the destruction of Troy."[41] The death of Jesus means, among other things, the destruction of Jerusalem.

### *Gloating over the Dead*

Immediately after Mark's claim that the veil of the temple was rent top to bottom, one reads: "Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's son!' "[42] Matthew and Luke saw this statement as a sincere — if insufficiently motivated — affirmation of Jesus' divine paternity. Matthew preceded the so-called confession with an earthquake, a sign of God's displeasure.[43] In this case, the centurion had seismological evidence that Jesus was God's Son. Luke wrote: "Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, 'Certainly, this man was righteous!' " Luke saw that Mark's story provided insufficient motiva-

tion for the centurion to confess Jesus as the Son of God, but the nobility of Jesus' death and the confidence of his final words—"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"—could have led his executioner to declare him righteous.[44] Commentators have scrambled to find some motivation for the affirmation of Mark's centurion within the Gospel. For example, many have thought the centurion somehow knew that veil of the temple had been rent, took this as a divine sign, and therefore pronounced Jesus as the Son of God. If this were what Mark intended, he should have written, "And when the centurion saw the rending of the veil, he said . . ."; but Mark wrote no such thing. Rather one reads: "And when the centurion . . . saw that he thus had expired. . . ." Other interpreters have attributed to the centurion a sophisticated theology of the cross; unlike everyone else in the narrative, he recognized in Jesus' death—sans miracle or resurrection—evidence of divine sonship. This reading is possible, but it surely is not the most natural reading of the text.

The words of the centurion drip with sarcasm. They constitute a gloat, a well-known and ancient speech act mocking the arrogance of a victim and enhancing the stature of the gloater.[45] Those who had taunted Jesus invited him to come down from the cross and save himself, if he were indeed the "destroyer of the temple," or "the Messiah, the King of Israel." Some at the foot of the cross thought his prayer of dereliction was a call to Elijah to rescue him. So when the centurion saw that neither Jesus himself nor Elijah delivered him from the cross and that he actually died, he reasonably assumed Jesus' boasts were hollow and gloated over him. Greek and Roman gods—and sometimes their sons—were immortal, so Jesus' death was proof of his hubris. One might paraphrase the centurion like this: "Oh sure, this corpse is God's Son!" The reader, of course, fully understands the irony of the situation: Jesus actually was God's Son and would be vindicated.

Similarly, after Achilles slew Hector, he and his troops gloated over him, as many Homeric victors do in the epic.[46] Compare the gloat over Hector with the centurion's gloat over Jesus.

*Iliad* 22.371–75 (Fagles 438–42, altered)

And not a man *stood over him* [παρέστη] who did not stab his body, *looking* [ἰδών] at a comrade, *saying* [εἴπεσκεν], "Ah, look here—*truly* he is softer to handle now than when he gutted our ships with roaring fire!" Thus someone would *speak* [εἴπεσκε] and stab him as he *stood over him* [παραστάς].

Mark 15:39

Now when the centurion who *stood facing him* [παρεστηκώς] *saw* [ἰδών] that in this way he breathed his last, *he said* [εἶπεν], "*Truly* this man was God's son!"

Achilles later gloated to his comrades: "[W]e have won ourselves great glory. He has brought / noble Hector down, that man the Trojans / glorified in their city like a god [θεῷ]!"[47] Jesus was not a god, but he was a son of God (υἱὸς θεοῦ). There is nothing in Mark to suggest that this utterance by the centurion was anything other than a gloat, like the gloat of Achilles over Hector.

### *Women Watching from Afar*

The Trojan women — above all Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen — play an essential role in the *Iliad.* Homer contrasts the Greek camp, composed almost exclusively of men, with Troy, a thriving city with the old, the young, and, most significantly, women. The Trojan women are helpless casualties of the war, dependent on the protection of their men, often their intellectual and emotional inferiors and who seldom hear, understand, or heed them. The plight of the women heightens the tragedy of the fall of the city, for even though they had not participated in the carnage and, with the notable exception of Helen, were entirely innocent of wrongdoing, they were raped, killed, and taken off as slaves.[48]

No Trojan warrior was more closely identified with these women than Hector.[49] He was Hecuba's most cherished son and Helen's closest male companion, dearer to her even than her husband.[50] Andromache had lost her parents and seven brothers, leaving only Hector for her support: "You Hector — you are my father now, my noble mother, / a brother too, and you are my husband, young and warm and strong."[51] The most tender moment in the epic is shared by Hector and Andromache in Book 6. It was Hector who summoned the Trojan women to Athena's temple to pray for victory. Trojan women considered him their sole defender.[52] When Hector rejoined the battle, the women feared he would never return and mourned his death as an anticipation of their own: "So in his house they raised the dirges for the dead, / for Hector still alive."[53] When he does die, they know that the floods of suffering soon will engulf them. Andromache lamented that the city would be sacked now that Hector was dead, he "who always defended Troy" and "kept her loyal wives and helpless children safe."[54] Now there was nothing to prevent the Greeks from leading the women away as slaves.

The laments at Hector's death thus come primarily from the mouths of women, who watched events from afar, from atop the walls of the city. "[H]is mother [Hecuba] began to tear her hair . . . / she flung her shining veil to the ground and raised / a high, shattering scream, looking down at her son."[55] Again

> noble Hecuba
> led the wives of Troy in a throbbing chant of sorrow:
> "O my child — my desolation!
> . . . . . .

> You were my pride throughout the city night and day—
> a blessing to us all, the men and women of Troy:
> throughout the city they saluted you like a god [θεόν].
> You, you were their greatest glory while you lived—
> now death and fate have seized you, dragged you down."[56]

Andromache, hearing Hecuba's lament, ran to the wall. "But once she reached the tower where soldiers massed / she stopped on the rampart, looked down, and saw it all."[57] She fainted.

> But crowding round her now her husband's sisters
> and brothers' wives supported her in their midst,
> and she, terrified, stunned to the point of death,
> struggling for breath now and coming back to life,
> burst out in grief among the Trojan women.[58]

She predicted additional woes for herself, her son, and all the Trojans once the dogs had done their work on Hector's corpse. Book 22 ends with the following magnificent and weighty line: "Her voice rang out in tears and the women wailed in answer."[59] The Trojan women again will play a dominating role at Hector's funeral.

Immediately after the gloat of the centurion in Mark, one reads, "There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome." Mark had to explain who these women were, for they were invisible in his narrative to this point: "These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem."[60] Mark apparently created this awkward flashback to provide these women a status in the story like that of the Trojan women. These women later will be important for Mark's story: the two Marys will observe where Joseph buried the corpse, and all three women will come to the tomb Easter morning to anoint him.

The parallels between the deaths of Hector and Jesus surely satisfy our criteria for mimesis. The account of Jesus' death is drastically shorter than Homer's account of Hector's death; even so, the parallels between them are dense and for the most part sequential.

| *Iliad* | Mark |
| --- | --- |
| The reader knows throughout that Achilles will slay Hector. | The reader knows throughout that the Jewish leaders will slay Jesus. |
| Hector, Apollo's favorite, had long eluded death. | Jesus, God's Son, had eluded death. |
| Hector's troops fled into the city for safety, leaving him to face his fate alone. | Jesus' disciples fled for safety, leaving him to face his fate alone. |

Zeus passed judgment: Hector must die.
Achilles and Hector traded taunts.

Hector called to Deiphobus for help,
but he had vanished.
Hector then knew he would be killed,
for his gods had forsaken him.
Hector's soul went to Hades with a
lament.
Trojans mourned him as though their city
had been destroyed "from top
to bottom."
Achilles gloated that he had just slain the
one Trojan considered a god.
The women of Troy, watching Hector's
death from their walls, cried laments.

Pilate passed judgment: Jesus must die.
Various hostile groups taunted Jesus;
he was silent.
[The by-standers thought Jesus was calling
to Elijah for help, but he never came.]
Jesus knew he would be killed and
complained that God had forsaken him.
Jesus uttered a loud shout and expired.

Jesus' death anticipated the fall of Jerusalem
and the temple, whose veil was rent
"from top to bottom."
The centurion gloated that he had just
executed a so-called son of God.
Three women watched Jesus' death
"from afar" and presumably lamented.

Although some of these similarities are generic, Mark's account retains distinctive traits from Homer, such as the abandonment of the hero by his protecting deity, the summoning and nonappearance of a mortal ally, the linkage between the death of a hero and the destruction of a city "from top to bottom," and the laments of women watching from a distance. These unusual characteristics should have been sufficient to prompt the reader to compare Jesus with Hector.

Furthermore, these parallels are interpretable. For example, they allow a new explanation of the centurion's statement that the man he had just slain was a "son of God." It was uttered in derision, a final insult, like Achilles' gloat over Hector as a putative god. Emulation is more difficult to identify here, but it will become more apparent in chapter 21. For now it may suffice to note that Jesus' heroism outstrips Hector's: Jesus long had known that he would die and did not cry to Elijah for help, as those at the cross surmised. Hector, on the other hand, thought to the end that he might prevail and called on Deiphobus to help. The Trojans had glorified Hector like a god, but now he was dead, his soul in Hades. Jesus, as a true son of God, will rise from the dead.

With respect to accessibility, every educated Greek knew how Hector died; it and Achilles' desecration of Hector's corpse were popular themes for ancient artists, especially vase painters and sarcophagus sculptors. Furthermore, Mark was not the first or last imitator of Homer's description of the death of Hector; his imitation had several analogs. Aeschylus treated the event in his *Nereids* and *Psychostasia* (*Weighing of Souls*), Euripides in his *Alexander*, Astydamas in his *Hector*, and an anonymous Hellenistic poet in fragments of a tragedy.[61] A school text survives paraphrasing the death of Hector, evidence that teachers targeted it

for mimesis.[62] Josephus was sufficiently conversant with *Iliad* 22 to imitate an obscure section of it.[63] Dionysius of Halicarnassus caviled the prose of Hegesias of Magnesia, a historian who told how Alexander the Great tortured an enemy commander by ordering "that a bronze ring be drawn through his feet and that he should be dragged round, naked. Pounded with the pain of passing over many rough pieces of ground, he sent up a scream."[64] Dionysius lamented that even though his passage resembles "those lines of Homer in which Achilles is made to outrage Hector after his death," Hegesias fell far short of Homer's grandeur and pathos. Dionysius surely would have objected as well to the imitation of the same lines in the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias,* where Myrmidonian cannibals "tied a rope around his [Andrew's] neck and dragged him through all the boulevards and streets of the city."[65] They tortured him in this manner for three consecutive days, until Jesus rescued him. Just as the gods preserved Hector's corpse from defilement, Jesus protected Andrew's body, for "large fruit-bearing trees" spouted from the flesh and hair that stuck to the pavement.[66] The story is a transvaluation of Homer's tale, a counterattack on pagan accusations of Christians as cannibals. The Myrmidons were Achilles' troops in Homer, and the poet described Achilles himself as eager to sink his teeth into Hector's flesh.[67] To ridicule Christian allegorical interpretations of scripture, Porphyry concocted an allegory of the conflict between Achilles and Hector as the conflict between Christ and the Devil.[68]

Vergil imitated the death of Hector at the end of the *Aeneid* in his description of the death of Turnus.[69] This Latin epic has been called "a Roman *Odyssey-Iliad*" insofar as Books 1–6 resemble the *Odyssey* and Books 7–12 the *Iliad.*[70] Vergil's imitation of Hector's death provides an invaluable analogy to the crucifixion in Mark and places it squarely within a tradition of Homeric hypertextuality. Much of what caught Vergil's mimetic eye caught Mark's as well.

The *Aeneid* concludes with a duel between Aeneas and Turnus outside the walls of Ardea. Turnus harbored hopes of slaying Aeneas because Juno and Juturna, his nymph sister, had protected him in the past. To assist him against Aeneas, Juturna appeared to him disguised as Metiscus, his charioteer, promising to join him in the fight.[71] He did not know, however, that his gods soon would abandon him. "Jupiter himself upholds two scales in even balance, and lays therein the diverse destinies of both, whom the strife dooms, and with whose weight death sinks down." Jupiter commanded Juno to forsake Turnus; she told him she already had done so: "I have left Turnus and the earth." Jupiter then moved "to withdraw Juturna from her brother's side, and sent a messenger bearing this command." Juturna had no choice but to consent: "Now I quit the field."[72]

Still oblivious to his abandonment, Turnus faced Aeneas, who began the duel with a taunt. The Latin champion answered with a taunt of his own: "The other shook his head, / Saying, / 'I do not fear your taunting fury, / Arrogant prince.' "[73] Turnus then threw a boulder at Aeneas, but it fell short of its mark.

He gazed at the Rutulians, and beyond them,
Gazed at the city, hesitant, in dread.
He trembled now before the poised spear-shaft
And saw no way to escape; he had no force
With which to close, or reach his foe, no chariot
And no sign of the charioteer, his sister [Juturna].
At a dead loss he stood.[74]

Turnus now knew his gods had forsaken him and that not even his sister would come to his side. This passage clearly imitates the moment of Hector's discovery that his brother, Deiphobus (Athena in disguise), had vanished, which also seems to have informed Jesus' cry of dereliction and the nonappearance of Elijah in Mark. Here is how Vergil narrates Turnus's death in the last line of the epic compared with how Homer had narrated Hector's death: Turnus: "And with a groan his life [*vita*] fled [*fugit*] indignant into the gloom below." Hector: "His soul [ψυχή] flying [πταμένη] from his limbs went to Hades, bewailing her fate." As Jesus' spirit left him, he, too, cried out: "Then Jesus gave a loud cry and released his spirit [ἐξέπνευσεν]."[75]

Vergil ends the epic with Turnus's death, without lamentations by women or a burial. The poet did, however, imitate the laments of the Trojan women in the lament for Euryalus by his mother.[76] Furthermore, the reader of the *Aeneid,* like the reader of the *Iliad* and Mark, knows that the death of the hero spells the fall of a city; Ardea will fall like Troy and Jerusalem.[77] These Vergilian imitations suggest that Mark's imitations of the death of Hector was no freak. It contributed to a vital literary tradition of Homeric mimesis.

# *Hydropatetics*

The gods decided to intervene against Achilles' defilement of Hector by enabling Priam to ransom his body. Zeus persuaded Thetis, Achilles' mother, to order her son to accept the ransom, and then sent the goddess Iris to Priam to embolden him to fetch the body, taking only his herald Idaeus to drive a wagon with an extravagant ransom. Hermes would provide safe escort, and Achilles would cooperate. Despite the obvious dangers, emboldened by Iris's promise and a reassuring sign from Zeus, Priam set out.

> But Zeus who beholds the world could hardly fail
> to see the two men striking out across the plain.
> As he watched the old man he filled with pity
> and quickly summoned Hermes, his own dear son:
> "Hermes—escorting men is your greatest joy,
> you above all the gods,
> and you listen to the wish of those you favor.
> So down you go. Down and conduct King Priam there
> through Achaea's beaked ships."[1]

Hermes prepared for his descent from Olympus and journey across the Aegean.

> Under his feet he fastened the supple sandals,
> never-dying gold, that wing him over the waves

and boundless earth with the rush of gusting winds.
. . . . . .
[H]e flew, the mighty giant-killer
touching down on Troy and the Hellespont in no time
and from there he went on foot, for all the world
like a young prince, sporting his first beard,
just in the prime and fresh warm pride of youth.[2]

Ancient artists distinguished these magical sandals by giving them wings, sure signs of the presence of Hermes or his Latin clone, Mercury.

As the king and his herald came to the ford of a river,

A sudden darkness had swept across the earth
and Hermes was all but on them when the herald
looked up, saw him, shouted at once to Priam,
"Danger, my king—think fast! I see a man—
I'm afraid we'll both be butchered on the spot—
into the chariot, hurry! Run for our lives
or fling ourselves at his knees and beg for mercy!"
The old man was stunned, in a swirl of terror,
the hairs stood bristling all over his gnarled body—
he stood there, staring dumbly.[3]

To put their minds at ease, Hermes approached them gently,

clasped the old king's hand and asked him warmly,
"Father—where do you drive these mules and team
through the godsent night while other mortals sleep?
Have you no fear of the Argives breathing hate and fury?
. . . . . .
But I would never hurt you—and what's more,
I'd beat off any man who'd do you harm."[4]

Priam rejoiced at the good fortune of encountering such a kind man and asked him who he was. Hermes lied: "I am Achilles' aide. . . . I am a Myrmidon." He promised to escort Priam until he safely reached his goal, over the sea if need be.

And the god of luck
leaping onto the chariot right behind the team,
quickly grasped the whip and reins in his hands
and breathed fresh spirit into the mules and horses.[5]

These divinely inspired beasts took the three men quickly to Achilles' ship. There, Hermes revealed his true identity.

> Old man, look I am a god come down to you,
> I am immortal Hermes —
> my Father sent me here to be your escort,
> but now I will hasten back.[6]

Hermes' ability to walk on water has parallels in two passages of the *Odyssey.* Athena left Mount Olympus to tell Telemachus that she would give him safe escort to Pylos and Sparta.

> [U]nder her feet she fastened the supple sandals,
> ever-glowing gold, that wing her over the waves
> and boundless earth with the rush of gusting winds.
> . . . . . .
> And down she swept from Olympus' craggy peaks
> and lit on Ithaca, standing tall at Odysseus' gates.[7]

Just as Hermes had taken on the appearance of a young man, Athena disguised herself as Mentes. Telemachus saw her, offered hospitality, and asked who she was. Like Hermes to Priam in the *Iliad,* she lied to Telemachus: "I am Mentes." She told him to sail to Nestor's Pylos and Menelaus's Sparta to inquire about his father from these veterans of the Trojan War. Later, Athena would appear to Telemachus again, this time as Mentor, to accompany him to Pylos, just as Hermes had accompanied Priam to Achilles.[8]

Athena's flight to Telemachus parallels Hermes' flight to Calypso at the beginning of Book 5, which also shows dependence on *Iliad* 24. Here again he is hydropatetic.

> Quickly under his feet he [Hermes] fastened the supple sandals,
> ever-glowing gold, that wing him over the waves
> and boundless earth with the rush of gusting winds.
> . . . . . .
> [T]he powerful giant-killer,
> swooping down from Pieria, down the high clear air,
> plunged to the sea and skimmed the waves like a tern
> that down the deadly gulfs of the barren salt swells
> glides and dives for fish,
> dipping its beating wings in burst of spray —
> so Hermes skimmed the crests on endless crests.[9]

This time, Hermes did not disguise himself, for he could not conceal his identity from Calypso: "Immortals are never strangers to each other."[10] He relayed to her Zeus's command that she release Odysseus and send him on his way. Reluctantly, she relented.

Jesus, too, walks on water in Mark 6:45–51, an episode scholars usually com-

pare with Yahweh's authority over the seas in Jewish scriptures. Many biblical texts speak of the power of Yahweh over the sea, as at creation, and some texts even speak of Yahweh walking on water. Indeed, scholars have related nearly every detail in the story to a biblical antecedent, especially to Exodus 14, the crossing of the Red Sea.[11] Other scholars have noted that Greek gods and heroes also walked on water, including Poseidon and his sons, but no one apparently noticed the similarities between Jesus' walking on the sea and Hermes' visit to Priam in *Iliad* 24.[12]

To set the scene, Mark had to separate Jesus from the disciples. He placed him on a mountain, sent the disciples out on the Sea of Galilee, and created a storm. "Immediately he forced his disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land."[13] The result is a setting similar to that in the last book of the *Iliad*, where Zeus and Hermes, on Mount Olympus, watched Priam's chariot and Idaeus's wagon driving perilously at night across the plain. From their mountains, Zeus and Jesus both saw the dangers of those below and took pity on them. Hermes and Jesus both came to them walking on water.

| *Iliad* 24.332, 340–41, 345–46, and 351–52 (Fagles 394, 404–5, 409–10, and 416–17) | Mark 6:48 |
|---|---|
| [*A*]*s he* [Zeus] *watched* [ἰδών] the old man filled with pity. . . . | *When he* [Jesus] *saw* [ἰδών] that they were tormented while rowing against an adverse |
| [Zeus told Hermes to help Priam.] Under his [Hermes'] feet he fastened the supple sandals, *that wing him over the waves*. . . . | wind, *he came to* them at the fourth watch |
| [H]e flew . . . touching down on Troy. . . . | of *the night, walking on the sea.* |
| A sudden *darkness* had swept across the earth, and Hermes was all but on them. | He intended to pass them by. |

In the dark, Priam's herald sensed someone was nearby, ready to slay them. He and the king panicked. Similarly, in the dark of early dawn, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, mistook his strides as the opera of a phantom, and panicked.

| *Iliad* 24.352–53, 355–36, and 358–60 (Fagles 417–21 and 423–25) | Mark 6:49–50 |
|---|---|
| [T]he herald *looked up* [τὸν δ' . . . ἰδών], saw him, | But when *they saw him* [οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες αὐτόν] walking on the sea, |
| *shouted* at once to Priam, . . . | they thought it was a ghost and *cried out*; |
| "I *see a man*. . . . "I'm *afraid* we'll both | for they all *saw him* and *were afraid*. |

be butchered on the spot — into the chariot,
hurry!" . . . The old man was *stunned,* in a
swirl of *terror,* . . . he stood there,
*staring dumbly.*"

"Hermes [αὐτός δ'] drew near the chariot to calm the fears of Priam and his herald; he questioned him and said . . ."; Jesus [ὁ δέ] "spoke to them and said . . ."[14] The speeches of Hermes and Jesus both assuaged the fears of those who saw them. Hermes did so by addressing Priam as "Father" and promising, "I would never hurt you — and what's more, / I'd beat off any man who'd do you harm."[15] Jesus reassured his disciples with the words, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." This phrase is more like Iris's reassurance to Priam than Hermes'.

| *Iliad* 24.169–170, 171, and 173 | Mark 6:50 |
| --- | --- |
| [T]he messenger of Zeus approached Priam and *spoke to him.* . . . "*Take heart* [θάρσει], O Priam, son of Dardanus, and *do not be afraid* [μηδέ τι τάρβει]. . . . *I am* [εἰμι] a messenger to you from Zeus." | But immediately he *spoke to them* and said, "*Take heart* [θαρσεῖτε], *it is I* [ἐγώ εἰμι]; *do not be afraid* [μὴ φοβεῖσθε]."[16] |

Jesus' self-identification with the formula "I am" also parallels Hermes' revelation to Priam: "I am Achilles' aide. . . . I am a Myrmidon"; "I am a god."[17]

Hermes leaped onto the chariot; Jesus climbed into the boat. Once aboard, Hermes took charge and "quickly grasped the whip and reins in his hands / and breathed fresh spirit into the mules and horses"; once aboard, Jesus calmed the wind.[18] Both journeys proceeded without difficulty.

Mark surely had access to this Homeric story; it appears near the end of the best-known book in Greek antiquity. Imitative analogies appear already in the *Odyssey,* as we have seen. In Vergil's *Aeneid,* Hermes, now as Mercury, again skims the sea with his sandals, transparently an imitation of *Iliad* 24.[19] The appearance of Hermes to Priam also informed the appearance of Jesus to Andrew in *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 32.[20]

The following columns show how dense and sequential the parallels are.

| *Iliad* 24 | Mark 6:45–52 |
| --- | --- |
| Zeus, on Mount Olympus, saw Priam traveling toward Achilles and pitied him. They drove the chariot and wagon through the darkness. | Jesus, on a mountain, saw his disciples traveling on the sea, making no headway. The disciples rowed in their boat all night. |
| Hermes walked on the water to Priam. | Jesus walked on the water to the disciples. |

| | |
|---|---|
| The herald mistook Hermes for an enemy and shouted. | The disciples mistook Jesus for a phantom and shouted. |
| Priam was terrified, expecting the worst. | The disciples were terrified, expecting the worst. |
| [Iris had reassured Priam by identifying herself, "[T]ake heart (θάρσει) . . . and do not be afraid (μηδέ τι τάρβει). . . . I am (εἰμι) a messenger from Zeus."] | Jesus reassured the disciples by identifying himself: "Take heart, it is I [ἐγώ εἰμι]; do not be afraid [μὴ φοβεῖσθε]." |
| Hermes reassured Priam by identifying himself: "I am [ἐγώ] Achilles' aide. . . . I am [εἰμι] one of the Myrmidons." [Cf. 24.460: "I am (ἐγώ) a god."] | |
| Hermes leaped into the chariot and traveled with Priam and the herald, quickly coming to the Achaean camp. | Jesus went up into the boat with the disciples, and the wind ceased. Soon they arrived at Gennesaret. |
| Hermes put the soldiers to sleep, allowing Priam to enter the camp safely. | Jesus calmed the sea, allowing the disciples to reach shore safely. |

Mark retained at least one distinctive trait from the story of Hermes. Like Zeus, Jesus is on a mountain and sees his disciples in danger, even though it is dark. Jesus' telescopic vision occurs only here in the gospels. Mark's dependence on the epic also may explain a notorious problem. Mark states that when Jesus walked on the water "he intended to pass them by." This phrase long has puzzled interpreters, for it suggests that Jesus had no intention of saving his disciples from the storm but only of manifesting his glory. Thus scholars have called the story an epiphany, not—at least not originally—a rescue. The comparison with *Iliad* 24 suggests another solution. Priam's squire saw Hermes "from up close" but not close enough to be distinguishable. Later, Hermes "drew near" and told who he was. Homer needed penumbral distance to facilitate the misidentification. Similarly, Mark may have used Jesus' walking past the ship instead of directly to it to set the scene for the misidentification of Jesus as a phantom.

Finally, if Mark imitated Hermes' visit to Priam, he also emulated it by transferring to Jesus the powers of the Olympian without the assistance of magical sandals. Furthermore, Hermes lied when he first encountered Priam and his servant, and only later disclosed his actual identity. Jesus, on the other hand, told the disciples immediately who he was: "It is I."[21]

# *Rescued Corpses*

Achilles tried to mutilate Hector's corpse behind his chariot, but the gods kept it from decay, birds, and dogs. Despite the danger and because of Hermes' help, Priam and his servant Idaeus safely reached Achilles' bivouac, and there the Greek hero granted them the body. They drove it back to Troy, where the women raised their laments and the Trojans prepared the funeral. Similarly in Mark, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to rescue Jesus' body and buried it properly, then women came to the tomb to care for it. As we shall see, the parallels between the burials of Hector and Jesus extend far beyond these superficialities.

## *Joseph's Mission*

"When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, dared to go to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."[1] Whether or not Joseph of Arimathea ever existed, Mark needed him to provide Jesus a tomb. Once Joseph had offered this service, he vanished from the story. The evangelist portrayed him as a distinguished member of the very group of Jewish authorities that had condemned Jesus, but Joseph secretly sided with him or at least identified with "the kingdom of God." His ambiguous status provides Jesus a silent patron with

enough credibility to coax his body from Pilate and sufficient means to provided him a cave-tomb hewn from rock. As king of Troy, Priam, too, was distinguished and wealthy, able to offer Achilles an enormous ransom and provide for Hector a lavish funeral. Like Joseph, Priam was noted for his piety.[2]

Priam began his journey at nightfall and arrived at Achilles' camp at the dinner hour.[3] Joseph went to Pilate at the same time of day: "when evening had come . . . the day before the sabbath."[4] Apparently he wanted to bury Jesus before the sabbath meal.

Joseph's request for the body was risky: "Joseph . . . *dared* to go to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus." The phrase "dared to go [τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν]" is similar to Homer's description of Priam's courage. Achilles asked him, "How did you dare [ἔτλης] to come [ἐλθέμεν] to the ships?" Later he observed, "No man alive, not even a rugged young fighter, would dare [τλαίη] to come [ἐλθέμεν] into [ἐς] our camp." Both Homer and Mark use the aorist of ἔρχεσθαι, "to come," and τλῆναι or τολμᾶν, "to dare," both from the root ταλ.[5]

Joseph here plays the role Homer gave to Hector's father. Later gospels, of course, named Jesus' father Joseph, and Mark surely could have known this tradition. Jesus' father does not bury his son, but his namesake from Arimathea does. A similar wordplay applies to Mark's Simon Peter, who failed to fulfill his promise to die with his Lord. Two other Simons play roles one might have expected of him: Simon the leper entertained him, and Simon the Cyrenian carried his cross. We shall see a similar play on the name Mary for the women who came to the tomb to care for Jesus' body. By having Joseph of Arimathea assume Joseph's responsibility for the burial of his son, Mark again may be criticizing Jesus' family.[6]

## *Jesus' Rapid Death*

The soldiers placed Jesus on the cross at 9:00 A.M., and darkness came over the earth from noon to 3:00 P.M., when Jesus died.[7] His crucifixion was astonishingly short; crucifixion was a metaphor for a slow and miserable death. Authorities often left corpses on crosses so that the scorching sun, wild animals, dogs, and birds of prey might do their gruesome work.[8] Even the bodies of those who had died by other means ended up on crosses for desecration by beasts and birds. Bodies sometimes rotted to mere bones.[9] Philo claimed that in exceptional cases Roman officials allowed the families of the crucified to bury them "on the eve of a holiday," so that they "should have the advantage of some kind treatment."[10] Usually, however, bodies stayed on the cross until they were devoured or desiccated.

Despite the cruelty of any crucifixion, Jesus' was less torturous than most, and

Mark made a point of it. "Then Pilate was amazed that he might *already* be dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead *for some time*. When he learned it from the centurion [that Jesus already had been dead for some time], he granted the body to Joseph."[11] Noting that criminals crucified often survived the entire day, the following night, and even the following day, Origen felt it necessary to defend the brevity of Jesus' suffering lest anyone think him a weakling. The Alexandrian exegete supposed that Jesus "had the power to offer up his own spirit" whenever it suited him to do so.[12] Mark, however, was not concerned to symbolize Jesus' power but to keep his body intact in anticipation of Easter morning. By compressing Jesus' crucifixion into six hours and by having the corpse buried immediately, Mark was able to prevent its violation by dogs, birds, and sun.

The theme of guarding a corpse against mutilation also dominates the burial of Hector. Achilles predicted that "dogs and birds" would have their way with his body, and Hector pled with him not to give his body to the dogs.[13] Achilles refused; indeed, he tried to mutilate his corpse by dragging it behind his chariot and exposed it "for the dogs to rip him raw."[14]

> So he threatened,
> but the dogs were not about to feed on Hector.
> Aphrodite daughter of Zeus beat off the packs,
> day and night, anointing Hector's body with oil,
> ambrosial oil of roses, so Achilles could not rip
> the prince's skin as he dragged him back and forth.
> And round him Phoebus Apollo brought a dark cloud down
> from high sky to the plain to shroud the entire space
> where Hector's body lay, before the sun's white fury
> could sear away his flesh, his limbs and sinews.[15]

Hermes assured Priam, on his way to Achilles' hut, that

> no birds or dogs have eaten him [Hector].
> No, there he lies—still there at Achilles' ship,
> still intact in his shelters.
> This is the twelfth day he's lain there, too,
> but his body has not decayed, not in the least.[16]

## *The Shrouding of the Corpse*

Achilles and Pilate both marveled at the requests of their uninvited guests; Achilles was astounded that Priam, the father of his slain enemy, dared to enter his home and kiss his murderous hands.[17] For his part, Pilate marveled that Jesus already was dead. Both Achilles and Pilate then gave orders to their soldiers:

Achilles sent two soldiers to get the ransom and summoned (ἐκκαλέσας) maidservants to "wash and anoint" Hector.[18] Pilate summoned (προσκαλεσάμενος) the centurion to see whether Jesus already had died. Compare the shroudings of Hector and Jesus.

| *Iliad* 24.587–89 (Fagles 688–92) | Mark 15:46 |
| --- | --- |
| So when the maids had bathed and anointed the body sleek with olive oil and *wrapped it* round and round in a braided battle-shirt and handsome battle-cape, then Achilles himself lifted it | Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, *wrapped it* in the linen cloth |
| *and placed it* [ἐπέθηκεν] upon a bier. | *and placed it* [ἔθηκεν] in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. |

Priam left Achilles' camp while it was still night and returned the corpse to Troy. At dawn ten days later they burned the body on a huge pyre, gathered the bones, and

> placed [θῆκαν] the bones they found in a golden chest,
> shrouding them round and round in soft purple cloths.
> They quickly lowered the chest in a deep, hollow grave
> and over it piled a cope of huge stones closely set.[19]

The preparations of the corpse follow a traditional progression: bathing, anointing, shrouding, burning, burial. The burning of corpses was no longer practiced in Mark's day, though bathing, anointing, shrouding, and burial were. Throughout Greek antiquity, the preparation of corpses fell primarily to older women.[20] Mark put these preparations in a unique and curious order. Jesus was anointed for his burial by the unnamed woman at the home of Simon the leper, then shrouded and buried, but on Easter morning, the two Marys and Salome came to the tomb to anoint Jesus, *after* he had been shrouded and buried, apparently oblivious to his previous anointing.[21]

Why did Mark rearrange the usual order of funeral preparations? Apparently he needed to provide the women some motivation for entering the tomb Easter morning. This was his way of placing the three women back on location to play roles similar to those of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen.

## *The Laments of Women*

Priam and Idaeus rode back to Troy with the body of Hector, and at dawn Cassandra saw them coming across the plain.[22] Similarly, "Mary Magdalene and

Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid. When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him."[23] In the *Iliad*, three women led the Trojans in the lament for Hector: "[T]he women wailed in answer. And white-armed Andromache led their songs of sorrow." "Her voice rang out in tears and the women wailed in answer / and Hecuba led them now in a throbbing chant of sorrow." "[A]nd Helen, the third in turn, led their songs of sorrow."[24]

The women who mourned the death of Hector in the *Iliad* were his mother (Hecuba), his wife (Andromache), and a promiscuous beauty (Helen). Mark provides virtually no information concerning the identities of the three women at the tomb, and one cannot know how much the earliest evangelist knew of later traditions about these women. Mark designates one of the two Marys at the tomb as "Mary the mother of James,"[25] surely the same woman earlier called "Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joses"[26] and "Mary the mother of Joses."[27] Mark probably did not think of this Mary as Jesus' mother, but 6:3 indicates that Jesus' mother also was the mother of a James and a Joses—as well as the mother of a Judah and a Simon and unnamed sisters. Just as Joseph of Arimathea performed a task befitting a father, namely the burial of his son, this Mary, with two sons who bore the same name as Jesus' brothers, performed a task befitting a mother, namely the preparing of her son's body for interment. The similarity in names may not issue from confusion but from a conscious criticism of Jesus' family. If so, this Mary is an ironic analog to Hector's mother, Hecuba. The play on the name Mary restates Mark 3:35: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

The other Mary is the Magdalene. Later traditions would variously identify her as an erstwhile demoniac, Jesus' most intimate female companion, and the woman of questionable repute who dried Jesus' feet with her hair.[28] She thus could resemble either Helen or Andromache. Apart from Mark, the New Testament is silent about Salome, though later traditions associate her with sexuality.[29] This may be due to an identification with the dancing daughter of Herodias, who conspired in the death of John the Baptist. Given the scarcity of evidence, it is impossible to associate Mary Magdalene and Salome with Andromache or Helen with any confidence. One probably ought merely note that just as three women led the laments for Hector at the end of the *Iliad*, three women came to the tomb Easter morning to care for the corpse in Mark.

The parallels between Priam and Joseph, Hector and Jesus, and the women of Troy and those at the tomb are thematic and seldom verbal, but the resemblances are dense and often appear in the same order. The right column in the following quotation reproduces Mark 15:42–16:2, virtually every motif of which appears in the paraphrase of *Iliad* 24, on the left.

*Iliad* 24

Priam, king of Troy, set out at night

to rescue the body of his son, Hector,
from his murderer, Achilles.
The journey was dangerous. He entered
Achilles' abode, and asked for the body
of Hector.
Achilles was amazed that Priam dared
to enter his home.
Achilles sent two soldiers to get the
ransom, and summoned maidservants to
"wash and anoint him."

Hector's body had been saved from
desecration.
"So when the maids had bathed and
anointed the body sleek with olive oil
and wrapped it round and round in a
braided battle-shirt and handsome
battle-cape, then Achilles himself lifted it
and placed it upon a bier."
[Hector's bones would be placed in an
ossuary, buried in the ground, and covered
with stones.]
[Priam left with the body at night and
brought it to Troy for a fitting burial.]
Cassandra was the first to see Priam
coming with the bier in the wagon.
Three women led in the lament:
Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen.

After elaborate preparations,
they burned Hector's body at dawn.

Mark 15:42–16:2

When it was late, and since it was the day of
Preparation, that is, the day before the
sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a
distinguished member of the council,
who was also himself waiting expectantly
for the kingdom of God,

dared to go to Pilate
and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate was amazed that he might
already be dead;
and summoning the centurion, he asked him
whether he had been dead for some time.
[A woman earlier had anointed Jesus.]
When he learned from the centurion that
he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.
[Jesus' rapid death and burial saved the
corpse from desecration.]
Then Joseph bought a linen cloth,
and taking down the body, wrapped it
in the linen cloth

and placed it in a tomb that had been
hewn out of the rock.
He then rolled a stone against the
door of the tomb.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of
Joses saw where the body was laid.
When the sabbath was over, Mary
Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James,
and Salome bought spices, so that they
might go and anoint him.
And very early on the first day of the week,
when the sun had risen, they went to
the tomb.

Mark's narrative also retains distinctive traits from the burial of Hector: the rescue of a corpse at night and the appearance of three women at the tomb to care for the body. Dependence on the last book of the *Iliad* also explains peculiarities in Mark, such as its unique reference to the dangers Joseph risked to claim the body and the preservation of Jesus' corpse from defilement. Emulation of the epic is the topic of chapter 21, but one can easily anticipate it. Hector's tomb remained inhabited, and the epic has forever remained a monument to Hector's mortality. After three days, Jesus' tomb would be empty, and Mark's Gospel would become a monument to immortality. Homer's lamentations contrast with Mark's joyful proclamation of the resurrection.

If Mark imitated the ending of the *Iliad* here, he participated in a popular tradition of Homeric hypertextuality. The first imitation of the burial of Hector appears in the *Odyssey* with the burial of Elpenor, whom we have met already.[30] The name Hector (Ἕκτωρ) means "defender," the defender of Troy; whereas Elpenor (Ἐλπήνωρ) means "hope-for-manliness" (ελπ- and ηνορ-). Despite his name, Elpenor "was not over valiant [ἄλκιμος] in war," a charge one could never make of Hector. Circe's wine was Elpenor's undoing, but when Hecuba offered wine to Hector, he refused: "Bring me no honey-hearted wine, noble mother, lest you cripple me, and I forget might and valor [ἀλκῆς]."[31] Despite these differences, Hector and Elpenor both died as young men, and their souls descended into Hades.[32] Hector's body remained unburied because of Achilles' savage desire for revenge; Elpenor's body remained unburied because of Odysseus's ignorance of his fall. The formula "unwept and unburied" appear together only once in the *Iliad* and once in the *Odyssey*: that in the *Iliad* refers to the body of Hector, that in the *Odyssey* refers to the body of Elpenor.[33] Elpenor began his request for burial by invoking the names of Odysseus's wife, father, and son, as well as all the living, a parody of Hector's appeal for burial from Achilles: "I implore you by your soul and knees and parents."[34] Elpenor told Odysseus that if he did not bury him, "I might become a cause of the gods' wrath against you." This phrase appears only once elsewhere in Homeric epic—on the lips of Hector as a warning to Achilles if he does not grant him proper burial.[35] Elpenor's appeal for burial almost certainly was inspired by a similar request to Achilles by the soul of Patroclus, but Elpenor's request extended well beyond mere burial; he wanted a barrow befitting a hero, complete with a monument, "that men yet to be may know of me."[36] His funeral echoes both the funeral of Patroclus in *Iliad* 23 and that of Hector in Book 24. Like Hector, Elpenor is buried, amid effusive weeping, at dawn.[37] Odysseus's crew, like the Trojans after burying Hector, joined in a feast.[38] The next chapter will argue that Mark not only borrowed from the burial of Hector but also transvalued the burial of Elpenor.

The poet of the *Odyssey* and the earliest evangelist join the company of other

imitators of Hector's burial. Aeschylus wrote a play entitled *The Ransoming of Hector,* as the tyrant and aspiring playwright Dionysius I. Ennius wrote his *Ransoming of Hector* on the basis of Latin translations of *Iliad* 24.[39] Neither play survives, nor does Sophocles' *Priam,* which probably dealt with the same subject. Vergil did not narrate the funeral of Turnus—he apparently wanted to end the epic with a final act of savagery—but imitations of *Iliad* 24 surface elsewhere in the *Aeneid.* Achilles' mutilation of Hector's corpse decorates a relief on Dido's temple and informs the narration of the mutilations of Nisus and Euryalus. Achilles' return of Hector's corpse was the model for the return of Pallas's corpse to his father, Evander. The lamentations of the Trojan women echo in the lamentation of Euryalus's mother, and the funeral for Hector (as well as that for Patroclus) provided the model for that of Misenus.[40] Statius repeatedly imitated the final book of the *Iliad* in the final book of the *Thebaid.*[41] Furthermore, "Priam's visit to Akhilleus was the most popular scene to be represented in Greek and Roman art of all the episodes in the *Iliad.*"[42]

# *Tombs at Dawn*

The tombs of Hector and Jesus are different in one crucial respect: Hector's tomb would forever contain his remains. Achilles announced the finality of Hector's death and the futility of Priam's tears: "[Y]ou will gain nothing by grieving for your son, nor will you raise him up [ἀνστήσεις]."[1] Apart from Odysseus's nekyia, epic tickets to Hades were one direction only. Jesus, on the other hand, predicted he would rise again (ἀναστῆναι), and he did so after three days in the tomb.[2]

The claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead is one of the earliest of all Christian confessions, and the other three gospels—as well as some apocryphal gospels—dramatize the resurrection by having Jesus appear to his disciples after his death.[3] Not so in Mark. None of the Twelve came to the tomb; in fact, Jesus himself was not there: he had gone to Galilee. In his place, one finds a mysterious young man inside the tomb. Although the other evangelists understood this youth as an angel (multiplied into two angels in Luke and John), he is a young man to Mark.[4] If the evangelist meant the youth at the tomb to be an angel, he certainly could have said so; he uses the word ἄγγελος five times in the Gospel to denote a heavenly being, and nowhere else does he call an angel a young man.[5]

Equally mysterious is the role of the three women at the tomb. The youth told them that Jesus was raised from the dead and gave them a single command: " '[G]o, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there

you will see him, just as he told you [in 14:28].' So they went out, and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."[6] The Gospel ends here, with the silence of the women. The young man did not tell them to announce the resurrection. The empty tomb itself witnessed to that, and Jesus himself had spoken of his rising from the dead frequently enough for his disciples to have comprehended the meaning of his missing body. It fell to the women merely to tell the disciples that if they were to meet the risen Jesus, they would have to go to Galilee. They failed in this simple but crucial task.

The authors of Matthew, Luke, John, and Peter—as well as the authors of the so-called shorter and longer endings of Mark—found this conclusion to Mark unacceptable and crafted various ways to alter it, so that Jesus invariably revealed himself to the disciples.[7] Although modern critics for the most part agree that the Gospel originally ended at verse 8, without an appearance of the risen Jesus, many of them, too, cannot bring themselves to think that Mark actually meant what he wrote. Interpreters have suggested that despite the women's momentary shock, later they mustered their courage and told the disciples to go to Galilee, or that despite the silence of verse 8, verse 7 assures the reader that the promised reunion with the risen Jesus would eventually take place, perhaps at the parousia.

Such a rendezvous in Galilee is precisely what Mark disallows. The text implies that nobody left Judea, even though Jesus had told them to do so in 14:28, and even though the young man told the women to remind the disciples to do so in 16:7. Scholars who have recognized the women's silence as permanent and decisive have understood it as an attempt to deprive the apostles of an authenticating vision of Jesus, as a critique of the Jerusalem church for not having relocated in Galilee, or as a refutation of a theology based on the continued presence of the risen Christ. Others claim the silence of the women is intentionally ambiguous to encourage readers to infer the end of the story and themselves witness to the resurrection.[8]

The solution to these peculiarities—the appearance of the young man and the silence of the women—actually is quite simple. If the women failed to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, they presumably never went there and thus never saw the risen Christ. They must have stayed in Jerusalem. For Mark and his readers, I submit, the consequences of the disciples not going to Galilee were devastating. Chapter 2 argued that Mark wrote shortly after the war and for that reason emphasized Jesus' suffering and death. The earliest evangelist understood the war to be God's punishment on Israel for the death of Jesus, but many of Jesus' followers apparently fell to Roman swords as well. If Jesus were the Son of God, why had he failed to warn his followers of the coming destruction? More specifically, if he

appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, why did he not tell them how to avoid the slaughter? Much of Mark is an answer to these questions.

By the third century, perhaps much earlier, a tradition emerged that an oracle had indeed warned the faithful to evacuate Jerusalem and to flee northward, toward Galilee and across the Jordan to the Gentile city Pella. Once the righteous had evacuated the capital, God sent the Roman armies to punish the Jews.[9] Few critics today accept this tradition as historically reliable. Its importance lies in its denial that the righteous had perished in the war.

For Mark there was no such denying the horrors inflicted on believers in Jerusalem, but he, too, wanted to exculpate Jesus. To this end he claimed that during Jesus' lifetime he had indeed given a sign to Peter, James, John, and Andrew about when to flee Jerusalem, but apparently they were unable to decode it. "[W]hen you see the desolating abomination set up where he ought not be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days."[10] Had the disciples recognized the sign of the "desolating abomination," they and others could have fled the city in time to avoid destruction. Jesus also forewarned that the sufferings during the war would be horrendous, "such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be." Even so, the suffering could have been worse. "[I]f the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days." Jerusalem came under siege during the spring of 70 C.E. and fell on August 9, thus answering the prayer that Jesus told his followers to pray: "Pray that it [the flight] may not be in winter."[11] Later, Jesus told the disciples, "[A]fter I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee," implying that they, too, must go there.[12] Had they done so, they might have avoided the carnage in Judea, which was more extensive than in Galilee.

Jesus revealed these things to the disciples before the resurrection, when they were still cowardly, uncomprehending, and generally unreliable. But tradition had it that Jesus also appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, when they should have been able to understand whatever he told them. If he did appear to them, why did he fail to instruct them how to escape the slaughter? By now Mark's answer should be apparent: Jesus never appeared to his followers after his death; he went before them to Galilee. The youth at the tomb told the women to tell the disciples to meet him there, but they failed to do so. In other words, one cannot fault Jesus for silence concerning the coming catastrophe. One must blame the thickheaded disciples at the Mount of Olives and the frightened women at the empty tomb.

Insofar as Mark could not place Jesus at the tomb, he needed a stand-in. The young man at the tomb probably is the same one who fled naked at the arrest, as many interpreters have argued. Each lad is unnamed, called merely a νεανίσκος, "young man." Furthermore, Mark emphasized the attire of each figure. The first youth was "wearing a linen cloak over his nakedness"; the second one was "wearing a white robe." Mark uses the verb περιβάλλω only of these two characters; in both cases he used the perfect middle participial form to mean "wearing"; both garments are potentially symbolic. The youth in chapter 14 wore a σίνδων, "linen cloth," over his naked body. Mark uses this word only four times, twice as the garment of this fleeing youth and twice of the shroud that wrapped Jesus' naked corpse.[13] The youth at the tomb, on the other hand, wore a white robe. Mark earlier had used glistening garments to symbolize the glory of Jesus' resurrection on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the statement that the lad was "sitting on the right side" likewise implies his risen state. The contrasting images of the two youths, one at the beginning of the Passion Narrative and one at the end, symbolize Jesus' death and resurrection.

Some interpreters have pressed this hypothesis further by arguing that the lad represents the Christian martyr, Mark's community, the author, or even Jesus himself. One of the most influential and attractive proposals takes the youth as a prototypical baptismal initiate.[14] Converts arrived at their baptisms wearing a coarse garment or even an animal skin, disrobed, and entered the water naked in imitation of Jesus' death. Emerging from the water they donned a white garment to resemble the resurrection.[15] Pre-Pauline metaphors about baptism leave little doubt that some early Christians associated the removal of a garment with a rejection of the old life and donning a garment with renewal, probably as a return to the divine image lost in the Fall.[16] So important was the symbolism of this post-baptismal garment that several texts, by metonymy, call baptism itself "the garment."[17]

Other scholars, however, object that the proposed linkages between the youth at the arrest and the youth in the tomb are too feeble and subtle to have been detected by the reader; they apparently eluded Matthew, Luke, and all readers before the twentieth century.[18] These interpreters typically understand the young man at the tomb to be an angel, as Matthew and Luke almost certainly did. The naked youth, on the other hand, is taken as a historical reminiscence, a signature by the author himself, an attempt to gain eyewitness testimony of the arrest, an intentional enigma, or a metaphor for highlighting the gravity of the flight of the disciples. This separation of the two youths is favored by many, if not most, commentators.

These objections to a combination of the two characters are not fatal. Mark refers to no other character as a νεανίσκος, and the use of this word in both cases

renders the anonymous figure symbolically enigmatic. Nowhere else in Mark does one find the verb περιβάλλω. The garment of each youth is metaphorical. The location of the figures—one just before Jesus' trials and one just after his resurrection—suggests they strategically bracket the Passion Narrative. Taken together, the two youths provide fascinating contrasts.

| Mark 14:51–52 | Mark 16:5 |
| --- | --- |
| Events took place at night. | Events took place at dawn. |
| At Jesus' arrest, the disciples fled, | The women came to the tomb and saw a |
| including the "young man [νεανίσκος] | "young man [νεανίσκον] wearing |
| . . . wearing [περιβεβλημένος] a linen | [περιβεβλημένον] a white robe," |
| cloth over his nakedness." | sitting in the tomb, on the right. |
| When they seized him, he "abandoned his linen cloth and fled away naked." | |

One objection to baptismal symbolism, however, is quite valid. The most obvious context in which to interpret the naked youth is not the empty tomb but the arrest; here the youth is not symbolic of Jesus but of the fleeing disciples. In fact, this youth seems to have little in common with Jesus or a baptismal initiate. He runs from danger in an act of unbelief; Jesus and, by imitation, the baptisand accept death willingly. "The young man is arrested and stripped; but he flees. In contrast Jesus is arrested and stripped and crucified."[19] The symbolism of the young man will concern us again later.

Chapter 16 suggested that the youth who fled naked was Mark's answer to Homer's Elpenor. One will recall that Odysseus, having spent the night with Circe learning that he must consult Tiresias, woke his comrades for the voyage to Hades. Still groggy from too much wine, Elpenor forgot he was sleeping on her roof and fell to his death without Odysseus's knowledge. Chapter 20 discussed Elpenor again as the poet's parody of the burial of Hector. Unlike Hector, Elpenor was not valiant, died ingloriously, yet wanted a burial like that of a hero. Furthermore, chapter 1 showed that Plato, Vergil, Plutarch, Apuleius, and the author of the Acts of the Apostles wrote their own versions of the Elpenor story, creating new characters to express various attitudes toward the afterlife.

The young man at the tomb Easter morning also imitates—better, emulates—Elpenor. Like Luke, Mark recast Homer's tragic story of Elpenor into a story about resurrection. Odysseus returned from Hades to Circe's island while it was still dark. The next morning, "as soon as early Dawn appeared," he sent his "comrades to fetch the body of dead Elpenor." They burned and buried his body, "sorrowing and shedding big tears."[20] The Trojans, "shedding tears," had burned Hector's corpse "when the tenth Dawn arose" and buried him the next day, "as

early Dawn appeared," as "big tears flowed ever down their cheeks."[21] No such grief overtook the women who came to Jesus' tomb at dawn to prepare it for burial. His body was gone, and in its place, inside the tomb, was the living young man, seated at the right side, wrapped in a white robe, and telling them, "He was raised; he is not here."[22]

Homer and Mark both placed these events emphatically at break of day.[23] Rewritings of the story of Elpenor demonstrate remarkable conservatism concerning this detail. Plato's Er revived from his visit to the netherworld as he lay on his funeral pyre "at dawn."[24] Plutarch's Timarchus revived "in the morning" from having visited the realm of the dead.[25] Luke's Eutychus "was taken up alive" only after Paul had spoken all night, "until dawn."[26]

Mark thus seems to have modeled the burial of Jesus after the burial of Hector from the *Iliad* and the young man at the tomb after Elpenor from the *Odyssey*, a remarkable demonstration of literary dexterity. As we have seen, the poet of the *Odyssey* crafted his Elpenor as a parody of the death and burial of Hector.

Now at last we can appreciate the symbolism of Mark's young man. Insofar as the earliest evangelist chose not to place Jesus himself at the tomb, he needed a stand-in, someone to tell the women that Jesus now was in Galilee. To this end Mark chose a character from Greek mythology with a long and distinguished history of symbolizing the afterlife. Plato already had recast the story of Elpenor into the myth of Er to symbolize reincarnation, and Luke later would recast it into the raising of Eutychus to symbolize resurrection.

At the arrest the youth symbolizes the flight of the disciples as a whole; he thus contrasts with Jesus, who goes courageously to his crucifixion. But as the story evolves, Jesus' situation increasingly resembles that of the young man, for at the crucifixion soldiers strip him naked, and Joseph of Arimathea later shrouds the corpse in a σίνδων. Like the youth in 14:51, Jesus now wears "a linen cloth over his nakedness." Just as the youth abandoned his shroud and reappeared in the empty tomb clothed in a white robe and sitting at the right hand, Jesus' shrouded body was transformed into a resurrection body, achieving the glory revealed at his Transfiguration: "[H]is clothes became dazzling white." He was exalted to God's right hand. The correlations between Jesus and this youth surely are intentional. Notice also that of the four canonical gospels, only Mark places the glorified youth *inside* the tomb ("the women *entered* the tomb and saw a young man"), suggesting he is a symbol of the glorified dead.

Mark did not just imitate Elpenor, he emulated him, and his reasons for doing so were similar to Luke's, namely, to symbolize resurrection. Unlike "unfortunate" Elpenor, who survived the Trojan War and dangers at sea only to die from an adolescent faux pas, Eutychus was "Lucky [ευ-τυχ]" to have suffered the same accident in the presence of Paul, who raised him back to life. His soul never left

for Hades but stayed in him, waiting for God to reunite it with the lad's body the following dawn. The earliest evangelist made a similar point. Unlike Elpenor, whose soul forever must reside in Homer's Hades, the young man in the tomb symbolized resurrection glory such as three of the disciples earlier had witnessed on the Mount of Transfiguration. The weeping of Odysseus's comrades as they buried Elpenor's corpse contrasts with the joy of the women, who discovered an empty tomb and learned that Jesus had risen.

# *Conclusion*

The twenty-seventh edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft), the standard critical edition of the New Testament, includes an appendix listing citations and allusions printed in the margins of the text. Sixty-nine columns contain about three thousand texts from the Old Testament (including the Apocrypha); four columns contain some three hundred texts from other Jewish sources. The entire expanse of pagan literature receives a measly five entries, none from Homeric epic, though two are from poetry: Menander's *Thais* frag. 218 and Euripides' *Bacchae* 794–95. The other major critical edition, *The Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies), provides two citation indices, one for "Quotations" and another for "Allusions and Verbal Parallels." Not a single noncanonical text appears among the quotations. Among allusions and verbal parallels one finds well over a thousand entries for the Old Testament, eighty-eight for the Apocrypha and other Jewish writings, and only four for all of pagan literature. Homer is still missing, and so now is Euripides, though the poet Menander survived the cut with one allusion.

Even scholars who have studied the New Testament in the context of Graeco-Roman literature have seldom argued for direct influence, focusing instead on comparisons of themes, genres, rhetorical strategies, language, and style.[1] For example, in his presidential address at the 1993 meeting of the prestigious Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Martin Hengel, arguably the most influential

German New Testament scholar of this generation and a champion of Greek influence on early Judaism, stated dogmatically that "the New Testament text scarcely anywhere requires one to suspect *direct pagan influence* on earliest Christianity. After all, what we discover there as 'hellenistic-syncretistic' traits can consistently be attributed to Jewish mediation within the compass of the exceedingly diverse Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora under the influence of 'god-fearers' and 'sympathizers' " (emphasis in original).[2] To be sure, not all New Testament scholars would agree with Hengel's extreme position, but during two millennia of interpretation, no one has suggested the parallels I am proposing between Mark and Homer. Despite incontrovertible evidence that no author was more influential than Homer in the training of Greek authors, even prose authors, his works are virtually invisible in New Testament scholarship. Why?

The simplest answer is that classical poetry in fact exerted no influence on early Christian texts. Homer's invisibility in scholarship mirrors his invisibility in the early church. I beg to differ. The parallels offered in the preceding chapters surely qualify for attention equal to many putative biblical models.

One source of this amnesia may be authorial intention. Mark hid his dependence by avoiding Homeric vocabulary, transforming characterizations, motifs, and episodes, placing the episodes out of sequence, and employing multiple literary models, especially from Jewish scriptures. On the other hand, he left scores of flags signaling the reader to compare these stories with their models.

The neglect of classical poetry probably has less to do with Mark's compositional strategies than with the history of interpretation. By the first half of the second century, the apostolic names Matthew and John attached themselves to their respective gospels and thus institutionalized the view that they were composed by eyewitnesses. Mark, so it was thought, recorded the memoirs of the apostle Peter.[3] Luke, though not an eyewitness himself, compiled his account from the testimony of those who were and from derivative written sources. This understanding ruled unchallenged until the Enlightenment and has loyalists even today. To this way of thinking, the very suspicion that an evangelist imitated pagan poetry would be theological lèse-majesté. Furthermore, Christians who have believed in Biblical inerrancy have sought to square the text of the gospels with historical events, rendering nearly irrelevant any quest for literary antecedents.

But the avoidance of epic is by no means limited to traditional or conservative Christians. Form critics stratify the development of gospel narratives into three levels and vigorously apply criteria for determining whether a text reflects reliable memories of the historical Jesus, the religious ideals of his followers, or the redactional activities of the evangelists. Scholars usually attribute the creation of the narratives analyzed in this book to the second stage, the dynamics of tradition. According to this assessment, the evangelists had little need to borrow from

the cupboard of classical literature, for they had more ingredients than they could use from Christian suppliers. A popular introduction to the New Testament demotes the evangelists to tinkering editors: "What is clear is that these stories came from somewhere, since it appears unlikely that the Gospel authors simply made them up."[4] This prejudice for tradition over composition obviously discourages any quest for generative literary models.

Not even literary criticism, with its concentration on the gospels as finished products, has increased attentiveness to epic poetry. When critics compare Mark with other ancient narratives, they bypass epic and run to contemporary prose, especially Jewish prose. Who would think to compare it with pagan poetry composed seven or eight centuries earlier?

Even the foundational tools of New Testament scholarship discriminate against Greek poets. The primary editions of the New Testament, as we have seen, cite potential quotations and allusions in the margins or footnotes and list them in appendices, but Homer is entirely absent; other Greek poets are nearly so. Lexicons and grammars of the Greek New Testament likewise slight classical poetry, whose vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic registers have little in common with Koine prose. The parallels with Homer proposed in this book fly below the radar of these reference works. Even the Greek synopsis of the gospels, so indispensable for their interpretation, "has tended to establish a method of comparing texts on the basis of something very simple—obvious verbal parallelism. Little or no effort is made to relate texts on the basis of complex methods of transformation current in the first century."[5] Ancient authors seldom retained verbal affinities with their literary models; they sought rather to adapt characterizations, plot strategies, type-scenes, and motifs. Unfortunately, "if two passages do not show fairly obvious parallelism they are either not compared, or their complex relationship, instead of being set in literary context, is usually accounted for on the basis of evidence which is missing and uncontrollable—oral tradition and lost documents."[6]

Perhaps the single most important factor in the absence of Homer in New Testament interpretation is the huge disparity between two *mundi significantes.* According to some literary critics, a *mundus significans* refers to the conceptual world of the text, which supplies its primary context for interpretation. Few scholars know Homeric epics as well as the average ancient Greek reader. Not only were the epics the primary—in some cases the sole—texts used in schools, not only did they serve as a cultural encyclopedia nearly everywhere Greek was spoken, they were favorite models for literary imitation, generating hundreds of ancient tales. Expansions on Homeric tales appear in ancient epics, tragedies, and prose. Ancient authors could expect their readers to draw connections with Homer that are invisible to us.

This invisibility even applies to professional exegetes. I received my Ph.D. from

Harvard University in New Testament and Christian Origins, a program rightfully renowned for its attention to Graeco-Roman as well as Jewish environments. We were taught to read widely in ancient historiography, philosophy, religion, and prose fiction; my minor was Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. Upon graduation I felt myself admirably conversant in Graeco-Roman literature and only modestly handicapped by ignorance of epic. I had read the *Odyssey* as a sophomore in high school and the *Iliad* only as needed for graduate papers, usually in translation. Those texts most important in ancient education were for me terrae incognitae. Had I not accidentally detected imitations of epic in the *Acts of Andrew* and then plunged into the wine-dark sea of Homeric influence on other literature, I never would have recognized parallels to epic in Mark.

By no means am I the first scholar to have investigated Mark with an eye to rhetorical imitation, but two aspects of my approach are unique. First, previous studies focused almost exclusively on mimesis of Jewish texts; I focus on pagan epic. Second, I apply criteria for identifying literary dependence. Because imitative strategies in antiquity were protean, they resist tidy taxonomies and defy detection. Authors felt free to borrow whatever they wished from any models whatever and to transform what they borrowed as they saw fit.[7] Many imitations were intentionally obvious, as with imitations of Homer by Apollonius Rhodius and Vergil, or sufficiently similar in wording to dispel doubts about dependence, as among the Synoptic Gospels. In such cases, the absence of heuristic criteria, though lamentable, is not fatal. These transparent examples, however, are the exception. Most imitations were more complex, subtle, and sometimes nearly imperceptible; indeed, one goal of rhetorical mimesis was to feign originality by disguising dependence, especially by employing multiple models, borrowing the best properties from each. In these cases the critic obviously must exercise more discipline, for without criteria one risks establishing connections between two texts where none may exist.

The first two criteria employed in this book are environmental: accessibility and analogy. The more widely accessible a literary work, the more likely the case for its imitation by later authors. Furthermore, often one can demonstrate analogies to the purported case of imitation, other texts that targeted the same model. The more numerous and sequential the similarities between two works, the stronger the case for dependence in terms of density and order. If the alleged model displays an atypicality—say, an unusual word, trope, shift in voice or venue—and the same atypicality appears in the alleged imitation, this anomaly satisfies the criterion of distinctiveness. Such atypicalities often function as flags to notify the reader that the tale is a rewriting of its model. Perhaps the most important criterion is interpretability, especially the identification of what rhetoricians called emulation. More often than not, imitators sought to improve their

models, whether in persuasive force, literary beauty, philosophical sophistication, or moral superiority. If the interpreter can identify and describe such an improvement, he or she will have added yet another reason for positing a literary relationship between them. Bona fide imitations need not meet all the criteria; these are guidelines, not tests.

No Greek books were more accessible than the Greek Bible (the Septuagint) and the Homeric epics, Mark's two favorite targets for mimesis. In many instances, evidence exists that the same model proposed behind Mark's narrative served as a model for other ancient authors as well; Mark's imitation had analogies. The parallels between Mark and the epics also are dense and often sequential. The analysis that follows traces the use of Homer in the earliest gospel from beginning to end to provide a synthesis of the reading of Mark promoted throughout the book.

The first fifteen verses of the Gospel consist of traditions Mark used to establish Jesus' identity as the Son of God. After his baptism and temptation in Judea, Jesus returned to Galilee and announced the approach God's kingdom. Similarly, the title and *epiclesis* of the *Odyssey* announced its focus on a single individual, a king who, together with his son, would reestablish authority over a kingdom.[8]

As soon as Jesus arrived in Galilee, he called fishermen to follow him. Here Mark establishes the "Sea of Galilee" as a context for Jesus' activity, provides him access to a boat, and introduces four sailors who would become his closest companions. Mark thus sets the stage for the first half of the Gospel, which, like the first half of the *Odyssey,* involves the sea, complete with winds, waves, and ships. The calling of these fishermen may be an imitation of Athena's calling of sailors for Telemachus in the *Odyssey.*

Jesus must keep his identity a secret from the Jewish authorities, especially the temple officials who had made his house a den of thieves. But his superhuman powers, especially miracle-working, were potential signs that he was not merely a carpenter from Nazareth. Jesus thus was furious with the leper who sought to be healed, for, according to the Torah, a leper had to demonstrate his purity to a priest. Jesus healed him but instructed him to say nothing to anyone about who had healed him. His fame as a healer and exorcist spread everywhere, "so that Jesus could not longer go into a town openly." Even more perilous than his miracle-working were the demons who invariably recognized him as the Son of God. Jesus thus silenced people and demons, but he never silenced anyone after performing miracles in the presence of the Jewish authorities. By then the damage was done. In addition to his authority over demons and illness, Jesus had authority to forgive sins and violate the sabbath. Because of his sabbath violations, the Pharisees "went out and conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."[9] They plotted against him even though they had not yet heard

him — or anyone else — declare him as God's Son. If they had, they surely would have charged him with blasphemy. They attributed his exorcisms not to God but to Beelzebul, the ruler of demons. Jesus thus resembles Odysseus, whose physical strength threatened to reveal his true identity as lord of the estate to the murderous usurpers. Whenever anyone discovered who Odysseus was, he silenced them for fear of discovery.

Early in the Gospel the reader suspects that the Jewish authorities may succeed in their deadly conspiracy: John, who had baptized Jesus, had been arrested; someday the bridegroom would be taken away from the wedding guests; Judas will betray him. Similarly, the reader of the *Iliad* knows throughout that Hector will perish at the hands of Achilles.

Jesus nicknamed James and John "Sons of Thunder," preparing the reader to compare these two erstwhile fishermen with the Heavenly Twins, protectors of sailors, the Dioscuri, "lads of Zeus," the god of thunder. The reader first views the disciples positively; they had left all to follow Jesus, had received "the secret of the kingdom of God," proclaimed his message, and exorcised demons. But Mark hints that in the end they might prove unfaithful, like the seed sown on the path whom Satan will claim, or the seed on the rocky ground who will wither during persecution, or the seed among thorns whom "the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things" will choke.[10] In other words, they may become like Odysseus's crew: greedy and unable to endure hardships. One finds the disciples often in roles Homer gave to Odysseus's crew.

The Calming of the Storm is an apparent imitation of Homer's story of Aeolus's bag of winds. Jesus plays a role similar to that of Odysseus; the disciples imitate the crew.

| *Odyssey* 10.1–69 | Mark 4:35–41 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus's crew boarded and sat down. | Jesus boarded and sat down to teach. |
| On a floating island Odysseus told stories to Aeolus. | On a floating boat Jesus told stories to the crowds. |
| After a month he took his leave, boarded, and sailed with twelve ships. | When it was late, he took his leave, and sailed. "Other boats were with him." |
| Odysseus slept. | Jesus slept at the stern. |
| The greedy crew opened the sack of winds and created a storm: "[A]ll the winds rushed out." | A storm arose: "[A]nd there was a great gale of wind." |
| The crew groaned. | The disciples were helpless and afraid. |
| Odysseus awoke and gave up hope. | Jesus awoke and stilled the storm. |
| Odysseus complained of his crew's folly. | Jesus rebuked his disciples for lack of faith. |
| Aeolus was master of the winds. | Jesus was master of winds and sea. |

Mark not only imitates, he emulates. Odysseus was helpless in the storm, but Jesus, like Aeolus, could calm it.

The next story in Mark is the exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac, where Mark seems to have borrowed from two of Homer's most memorable tales, Odysseus's escape from the giant Polyphemus and the rescue of his comrades from Circe, who had turned them into swine. From the Circe tale Mark adapted the adjuring of the hero to do no harm and the motif of turning people (or demons) into swine. Most of the parallels, however, pertain to Homer's *Cyclopeia,* which appears in the *Odyssey* immediately before Aeolus's bag of winds. In other words, Homer and Mark both told similar tales consecutively, though in reversed order. Once again, Jesus plays the part of Odysseus.

| *Odyssey* 9.101–565 | Mark 5:1–20 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus and his crew, in a convoy, arrived at the land of the Cyclopes. | Jesus and his disciples, with "other boats," arrived at the land of the Gerasenes. |
| On the mountains "innumerable goats" grazed. | [On the mountains "about two thousand" swine grazed.] |
| Odysseus and crew disembarked. | Jesus and his disciples disembarked. |
| They encountered a savage, lawless giant who lived in a cave. | They encountered a savage, lawless demoniac who lived among the caves. |
| He asked if Odysseus came to harm him. | He asked Jesus not to torment him. |
| The giant asked Odysseus his name. | Jesus asked the demoniac his name. |
| Odysseus answered, "Nobody." | The demoniac answered, "Legion." |
| Odysseus subdued the giant with violence and trickery. [Circe had turned Odysseus's soldiers into swine.] | Jesus subdued the demons with divine power and sent them into the swine and then into the sea. |
| The shepherd called out to his neighbors. | The swineherds called on their neighbors. |
| The Cyclopes came to the site asking about Polyphemus's sheep and goats. (Polyphemus usually was depicted nude.) | The Gerasenes came to the site to find out about their swine. |
| | The demoniac, once naked, now is clothed. |
| Odysseus and crew reembarked. | Jesus and his disciples reembarked. |
| Odysseus told the giant to proclaim that he had blinded him. | [Jesus told the healed demoniac to proclaim that he had healed him.] |
| The giant asked Odysseus, who was now aboard ship, to come back. | The demoniac asked Jesus, now aboard ship, if he could be with him. |
| Odysseus refused the request. | Jesus refused the request. |
| Odysseus and crew sailed away. | Jesus and disciples sailed away. |

The density and order of these motifs, especially the immediate juxtaposition of the stories of sleeping on a ship and the encountering of a monster, surely issue

from mimesis. The differences in the stories issue in part from emulation. Odysseus's violence left Polyphemus blind; Jesus' powers over the demonic returned the savage to his senses.

In the episodes that follow, Jesus successfully keeps his identity a secret, despite his performance of miracles. For example, he sailed "to the other side," where the leader of a synagogue asked him to heal his daughter, but before Jesus arrived, she died. Jesus would revive her, but such an unmistakable demonstration of his powers must be hidden from the authorities, so he "strictly ordered them that no one should know this."[11] Despite the dangers of discovery, he and his disciples "cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them."[12] This activity raised questions concerning Jesus' identity in high places, but no one yet suspected him of being the Son of God. Some proposed he was Elijah returned from the dead, and others "one of the prophets." Herod guessed that "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."[13] The secret was still secure.

Mark's narration of the death of John anticipates the death of Jesus, increasing the reader's awareness of danger. His models for the death of John seem to have been the story of Esther and especially Agamemnon's murder at the hands of Clytemnestra.

| *Odyssey* | Mark 6:17–29 |
|---|---|
| Homer narrated the story as a flashback. | Mark narrated the story as a flashback. |
| Clytemnestra forsook her husband for his cousin. | Herodias forsook her husband for his brother. |
| Clytemnestra sought to kill Agamemnon, who posed a threat to her affair. | Herodias sought to kill John, who posed a threat to her affair. |
| Aegisthus hosted a banquet and invited the king and his soldiers. | Antipas hosted a banquet and invited dignitaries. |
| Agamemnon was slain amid serving dishes. | John was beheaded, and his head brought in on a platter. |
| In art Clytemnestra characteristically wields a two-headed ax, and later authors had her beheading Agamemnon. | |
| The feast was befouled by murder. | The feast was befouled by murder. |
| The murder of Agamemnon anticipates the perils Odysseus will face. | The murder of John the Baptist anticipates the perils Jesus will face. |

Jesus and the disciples sailed again, this time to a deserted place for rest, but the crowds followed him to hear his teachings. There he fed five thousand men on five loaves and two fish. Mark's models here probably were Elisha's multiplica-

tion of bread in 2 Kings 4 and the feast of Nestor to forty-five hundred men at the shore of Pylos in the *Odyssey*.

| *Odyssey* 3 | Mark 6:34–44 |
|---|---|
| Telemachus and Athena sailed and disembarked. | Jesus and disciples sailed and disembarked. |
| They found a great crowd on the shore, 4,500 men. | They found a great crowd on the shore, 5,000 men. |
| Everyone sat down in "companies," nine groups of 500 each. | Everyone sat down in "drinking groups" and "garden beds" by hundreds and fifties. |
| Peisistratus ordered his guests to sit. | Jesus had ordered people to sit. |
| Nestor sacrificed and others prayed. | Jesus offered thanks to God. |
| They took the meat and divided the food. | Jesus took the loaves and fish and divided them. |
| Everyone ate and was filled. | Everyone ate and was filled. |

Jesus then forced his disciples to board ship without him. The ensuing adventure seems to be Mark's imitation of Hermes' walking on the water to Priam in Book 24 of the *Iliad*.

| *Iliad* 24 | Mark 6:45–52 |
|---|---|
| Zeus, on Mount Olympus, saw Priam traveling toward Achilles and pitied him. | Jesus, on a mountain, saw his disciples traveling on the sea, making no headway. |
| They drove the chariot and wagon through the darkness. | The disciples rowed in their boat all night. |
| Hermes walked on the water to Priam. | Jesus walked on the water to the disciples. |
| The herald mistook Hermes for an enemy and shouted. | The disciples mistook Jesus for a phantom and shouted. |
| Priam was terrified, expecting the worst. | The disciples were terrified, expecting the worst. |
| [Iris had reassured Priam by identifying herself: "[T]ake heart . . . and do not be afraid . . . I am a messenger from Zeus."] | Jesus reassured the disciples by identifying himself: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." |
| Hermes reassured Priam by identifying himself: "I am Achilles' aide . . . I am one of the Myrmidons." | |
| Hermes leaped into the chariot and traveled with Priam and the herald, quickly coming to the Achaean camp. | Jesus went up into the boat with the disciples, and the wind ceased. Soon they arrived at Gennesaret. |
| Hermes put the soldiers to sleep, allowing Priam to enter the camp safely. | Jesus calmed the sea, allowing the disciples to reach shore safely. |

At the beginning of chapter 8, Mark narrates another meal for thousands, this time modeled after the feast of Menelaus.

| *Odyssey* 4 | Mark 8:1–10 |
|---|---|
| Telemachus and Peisistratus rode to Sparta. | Jesus and disciples walked to Galilee. |
| Menelaus refused to send them away unfed. | Jesus refused to send his guests away unfed. |
| Everyone sat, men and women. | Everyone sat, apparently men and women. |
| They took bread, wine, meat | Jesus took bread and fish |
| and distributed them. | and distributed them. |
| Everyone ate and was filled. | Everyone ate and was filled. |
| Homer used the meals to educate | Mark used the meals to illustrate Jesus' |
| Telemachus in hospitality. | hospitality and to educate his disciples |
| | concerning his generosity and power. |

Jesus sailed again, further alienated the Jewish authorities, performed more miracles, demanded silence from those who witness them, and refused to produce "a sign from heaven" for querulous Pharisees. His secrecy held, for even though people suspected he was not merely the carpenter from Nazareth, they again misidentified him as John, Elijah, or a prophet. The disciples continued to disappoint Jesus, for though they had eyes, they could not see. They failed to appreciate the meaning of his multiplying the loaves. But Peter, in a flash of insight, correctly guessed Jesus' identity, just as Eurycleia had recognized the beggar: "[Y]ou are Odysseus." "Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered him not to tell anyone about him." Jesus thus silenced Peter just as Odysseus had silenced Eurycleia. Jesus then predicted for the first time that he, as the Son of Man, "must suffer many things"—πολλὰ πάσχειν is common in the *Odyssey*—"and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."[14] Like Achilles, Jesus bravely continued his mission, fully aware that it would cost him his life. Peter, like Hector, optimistically rejected the inevitability of suffering and death. Jesus told him and the rest of the Twelve: "If anyone would follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."[15] Peter would fail to do so, despite his noble intentions.

Jesus then granted Peter and the Sons of Thunder a spectacular demonstration of his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, an episode modeled after Odysseus's demonstration of his identity to Telemachus. Athena transformed Odysseus's garments, just as God did for Jesus.

| *Odyssey* 16.167–307 | Mark 9:2–10 |
|---|---|
| Odysseus was alone with Telemachus. | Jesus was alone with Peter, James, and John. |
| Athena transformed Odysseus and dressed | Jesus was transformed, "and his clothes |

| | |
|---|---|
| him in a "well-washed cloak." | became dazzling white, such as no launderer on earth could whiten them." |
| Telemachus was terrified by the transformation, thinking the beggar was a god, and offered gifts. | The disciples were terrified by the transformation and offered to construct three tents. |
| Odysseus refused; he was no god but the boy's father. | A voice from heaven rebuked Peter and announced that Jesus was God's Son. |
| Odysseus demanded that Telemachus keep his identity a secret. | Jesus demanded that his disciples tell no one what they had seen "until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." |
| Telemachus maintained secrecy. | The disciples maintained secrecy. |

After the Transfiguration, Jesus continued his journey toward Jerusalem and his confrontation with the Jewish authorities. Along the way he healed the sick, tried to conceal his identity, and repeatedly predicted his death. The disciples, however, still could not come to terms with Jesus' fate, prompting him to instruct them in discipleship.

After Jesus' most detailed prediction of his passion, one finds the request of the Sons of Thunder for positions of eternal glory at Jesus' right and left hand. They had seen Jesus glorified in the presence of Elijah and Moses and wanted such glory for themselves. Here again Mark portrays the Boanerges as avatars of the Dioscuri, commonly portrayed on either side of a seated, glorified deity. Zeus had offered Polydeuces the opportunity to share a single immortality with his slain brother, Castor, but Jesus refused the petition of James and John. Instead, he asked if they were able to share his cup and baptism, that is, to die with him. They stated they were, but at the arrest they, like the others, fled, and at the crucifixion it would not be they but two thieves who would die with him, "one on the right hand and one on the left."

Jesus' last act before entering Jerusalem was the healing of blind Bartimaeus, a character apparently inspired by Homer's Tiresias. Like Tiresias, Bartimaeus was a blind seer. Tiresias, in Hades, recognized the stranger as "son of Laertes, Odysseus"; Bartimaeus recognized the stranger as "Son of David, Jesus." Unlike Tiresias, who remained blind and in Hades when Odysseus left for home, Bartimaeus received his sight and followed Jesus "on the way."

Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem in chapter 11; never again will he wander about or oppose demons. As in the second half of the *Odyssey,* his enemies now are mortals who have made his house a den of thieves. Odysseus and Jesus both reside in humble accommodations—the hut of a swineherd or the home of a leper—and enter the palace or the temple to confront their rivals.

The so-called Triumphal Entry imitates the meek entry of Odysseus into the city of the Phaeacians.

| *Odyssey* 6 and 7 | Mark 11:1–14 |
| --- | --- |
| Odysseus arrived on the island of the Phaeacians bereft and unbefriended. | Jesus arrived in Judea without money or a host. |
| Athena told Nausicaa to ask her father for mules and a wagon. | Jesus told two of his disciples to find a colt and bring it to him. |
| Nausicaa told her father she needed the wagon to do her wash. | The disciples told those with the colt, "The Lord has need of it." |
| Her father granted Nausicaa the mules. | Those responsible for the colt allowed them to take it. |
| Nausicaa and her maidens went to the shore to wash clothing and there found Odysseus. | |
| "Folding the *clothes she packed them into her painted wagon,* hitched the sharp-hoofed *mules,* and *mounted the wagon.*" | "They brought the *colt* to Jesus *and threw their cloaks on it*; and *he sat on it.*" |
| Odysseus, though a king, entered the city wearing someone else's clothing, behind a mule wagon carrying laundry. | Jesus, though the Son of God, entered the city in humility, riding on someone else's beast of burden with clothing for a saddle. |
| Nausicaa thought Odysseus's coming was according to the will of the gods, and the Phaeacians thought he was divine. | The crowds shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." |
| He entered the city late in the day. "And there Odysseus stood, *gazing at all this bounty*" of glorious architecture and vegetation, including the fig trees that bore even out of season. | On entering the temple late in the day, Jesus "*looked around at everything*." |
| | The next day, he cursed a fig tree for bearing no fruit; "it was not the season for figs." |

Jesus then entered the temple and began to expel those who conducted business there, overturning their tables and chairs, claiming they had made his house a den of thieves. Mark's model may have been the *Mnesterophonia,* the Slaying of the Suitors. Confirmation of this identification of the temple authorities with the suitors comes in the form of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. Here Jesus, the "beloved son," resembles Telemachus.

| *Odyssey* | The Parable of the Wicked Tenants |
| --- | --- |
| Odysseus built his house, | "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it . . . and built a watch tower; |
| put his servants in charge, | then he leased it to tenants |
| and went off to fight in Troy. | and went to another country." |
| The suitors abused the master's servants | The tenants abused the master's servants and |

and ate from the estate as though it were their own.
Telemachus, "the beloved son," sought to regain his authority over the estate.
"Then *among them spoke Antinous. . . .*
*'[L]et us here devise for him a woeful death,* for Telemachus. . . .
*[H]is property let us ourselves keep and his treasure,* dividing them fairly among us" (16.363, 371–72, and 384–85).
The suitors laid an ambush for the son, but he eluded them.
Odysseus returned,
destroyed the suitors,
and reestablished his authority.
[The suitors had to be cautious for fear the residents of Ithaca might drive them from the island (16.376–82).]

kept the produce of the vineyard for themselves.
The master sent his "beloved son," the heir, to collect the produce from the vineyard.
"But *those tenants said to one another,*
'This is the heir; come, *let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.*'

So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.
What will the owner of the vineyard do?
He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others."
The authorities recognized that Jesus spoke this parable against them and "wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd."

Jesus continued debating the Jewish authorities, outwitting them at every turn: about paying taxes to Caesar, about marriage in the hereafter, and about the greatest commandment. Bested, the authorities "no longer dared to ask him anything." In his denunciation of the authorities, Jesus accused them of vices characteristic of Penelope's suitors: they desire "the first seats at banquets" and "devour the houses of widows." The next pericope contrasts the rich with the widow who gave all she owned to the temple treasury. Homer similarly contrasted the greed of the suitors with Penelope's hospitality.

Jesus' prophecies to four of his disciples in the so-called Marcan Apocalypse derive in large measure from tradition, but the beginning and ending of the prophecies imitate Odysseus's prophecies to Penelope in the *Niptra.*

*Odyssey* 19

Telemachus was amazed at the great light shining on the walls of his house.
Odysseus went to Penelope and sat.
Penelope, in private, questioned Odysseus.

Odysseus answered and gave her sure signs (σήματα) that he had seen her husband and that he would return.
Odysseus was consulting the sacred oak.

Mark 13:1–4 and 28–37

One of Jesus' disciples was amazed at the great buildings in the temple area.
Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and sat.
Four of the disciples, in private, asked about the destruction of the temple.
Jesus answered and gave the sign (σημεῖον) when he would return.

The disciples should consult the fig tree.

| | |
|---|---|
| "He is very near." | "He is near." |
| "All these things shall be brought to pass." | "[U]ntil all these things have taken place." |

Jesus ended his prophecies with a parable similar to the plot of the epic: his return as the Son of Man "is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly."

Immediately after Odysseus's prophecies to Penelope, Eurycleia washed and anointed his feet, and then discovered the tell-tale scar. Similarly, immediately after Jesus' prophecies to the disciples, an unnamed woman anointed him in preparation for his burial. The contiguity of private prophecies and the anointings by women in the *Odyssey* and Mark surely derives from mimesis. Eurycleia means "far-flung renown"; the woman who anointed Jesus would have renown "wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world."

| *Odyssey* 19.308–507 | Mark 14:1–11 |
|---|---|
| After giving these prophecies, Odysseus, | After giving these prophecies, Jesus sat |
| disguised as a beggar, sat by himself. | at table in the humble home of a leper. |
| Eurycleia came in with a bowl of water | A woman came in with an expensive |
| and washed his feet; | alabaster jar of ointment and poured |
| later she "anointed him richly with oil." | the oil on Jesus' head. |
| She dropped the brass vessel to the ground, | She broke the jar to release the oil. |
| spilling all the water. | |
| She alone recognized her king. | She alone recognized that Jesus would die. |
| Odysseus and Eurycleia discussed the | "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, |
| treachery of some of the servants | went to the chief priests |
| who sided with the suitors. | in order to betray him to them." |

The next section in Mark, the Last Supper and Gethsemane, contains several allusions to Jewish scriptures, but as a narrative it most resembles sections of *Odyssey* 10. The disciples again ape Odysseus's crew.

| *Odyssey* 10.100–103 and 105–16 | Mark 14:13a–16 (arranged chronologically) |
|---|---|
| So then I *sent* forth *some of my comrades* | So he *sent* [to find a place for the Passover] |
| to go and learn who the men were, who | |
| here ate bread upon the earth— | |
| *two* men I chose, and sent them | *two of his disciples.* |
| a third as a herald. Now when they had | |
| gone ashore, *they went* along a smooth | |

road. . . . And in front of *the city they met a girl drawing water,* the stalwart daughter of Laestrygonian Antiphates, who had come down to the fair-flowing spring Artacia, from which they *carried water to the town.*
So they came up to her and spoke to her, and *asked* her who was *king of this people,* and who they were of whom he was lord.

And *she showed them* forthwith *the high-roofed house* of her father. Now when they entered the *glorious* house, *they found* [εὗρον] there his wife, huge as the peak of a mountain, and they were aghast at her. At once she called from the place of assembly the glorious Antiphates, her husband. . . . Instantly he seized one of my comrades *and made ready his meal.*

*They went* off and entered *the city.*
*A man met them*
who was *carrying a jar of water.*

And they followed him, and when he entered, *they said* to *the owner of the house,* "The teacher *asks,* 'Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' " *He showed them*
*a large room upstairs,*
*furnished and ready.*
Thus *they found* [εὗρον] everything as he had told them,

*and* they *prepared*
*the Passover meal.*

The meal that follows in the epic was a cannibals' feast; the meal in Mark included Jesus' body and blood.

Mark describes the Passover meal, incorporating a traditional liturgy, but resumes borrowing from the epic in narrating events at Gethsemane. Just before Odysseus left Circe's island, she offered him and his crew a last supper, and after the meal, the crew slept while Odysseus went to Circe's bedroom, where he asked for directions home. Similarly, Jesus had a Last Supper with his disciples, after which his disciples slept as he struggled in prayer over his impending fate.

*Odyssey* 10.480–84

[B]ut *I went up to the* beautiful *bed of Circe and besought her* by her knees; and the goddess heard my voice, and *I spoke,* and addressed her with winged words: "*Circe,*
fulfill for me the promise which you gave to send me home."

Mark 14:35–36

And *going a little farther,* he *threw himself on the ground and prayed* that if possible, the hour might pass from him.
*He said,*
*Abba, Father,* for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me."

Ironically, when Odysseus learned he must go to Hades he desired death; Jesus knew he must die and was "grieved even unto death."

*Odyssey* 10.496–502

[A]nd *my spirit was broken* within me,
and I *wept* as I sat on the bed, *nor had my*
*heart any longer desire to live* and behold
the light of the sun. But when I had had
my fill of *weeping and writhing,* then I
made answer, and addressed her, *saying:*
"Who, *Circe,* will guide us on this
journey? To Hades no man ever yet went."

Mark 14:33b–36a

[Jesus] began to be *distressed* and *agitated.*
And he said to them,
"*My soul* is
*deeply grieved even unto death.* . . .
And going a little farther, he *threw himself*
*on the ground* and prayed that if it were
possible, the hour might pass from him. He
*said,* "*Abba,* Father, . . . remove this cup
from me."

Both heroes resigned themselves to their fates and woke their sleeping comrades.

*Odyssey* 10.546–50

But *I went* through the halls, and roused
my men *with winning words,* coming up
to each man in turn: "Although *you are*
*sleeping,* no longer *take your*
*fill of sweet sleep,*
but *let us go; lo*!
queenly Circe has told me all."
*So I spoke,* and their proud hearts
consented.

Mark 14:41–43a

*He came* a third time
*and said* to them,
"*You are* still *sleeping and taking your rest*!
Enough! The hour has come; the Son of
Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
Get up, *let us be going. See*
my betrayer is at hand."
Immediately, *while he was still speaking,*
Judas, one of the twelve, arrived.

When Odysseus woke him, Elpenor forgot he was sleeping on the roof and fell to his death. His soul fled to Hades and awaited the arrival of the hero. At Jesus' arrest, a young man fled away naked, leaving his shroud behind. This lad thus symbolizes Jesus' death; he will reappear at the empty tomb.

Soldiers then led Jesus off to his trial before the Jewish authorities, who failed to establish his ever having said he would destroy the temple and build another. Like Odysseus brooding in silence among the suitors, Jesus said nothing. The high priest then asked him directly if he was "the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One." His answer was a self-disclosure similar to Odysseus's to the suitors. He would return in power and judgment against his foes.

In the Passion Narrative, Judas plays a role similar to that of the turncoat Melanthius in the *Odyssey.* Barabbas plays a role similar to Irus the beggar. The episodes with Irus and with Barabbas are similar insofar as the hero in each tale, unrecognized for his true identity, receives ironic honors.

*Odyssey* 18.118–22

And Antinous set before him a great
paunch, filled with fat and blood,

Mark 15:17–19

And they [the soldiers] clothed him in a
purple cloak;

and Amphinomus took up two loaves
from the basket and set them before him,
*and pledged him in a cup of gold, and*
*said: "Hail* [Χαῖρε]*, father stranger*; may
happy fortune be yours in time to come."

and after twisting some thorns into a crown,
they put it on him.
*And they began saluting him,*
*"Hail* [Χαῖρε]*, King of the Jews!"*
They struck his head with a reed, spat upon
him, and knelt down in homage to him.

But Mark's primary literary model for the death of Jesus was the death of Hector in *Iliad* 22. Throughout most of the *Iliad,* Apollo and Zeus protected Hector from harm, but they abandoned him when he faced Achilles in a duel. The rest of the Trojans fled into the city, leaving their hero alone to face his foe. At first he fled from Achilles but turned to fight when his brother Deiphobus appeared to join in. Little did he know that Deiphobos was none other than Athena, his enemy, in disguise. He and Achilles traded taunts and hurled spears, but when he turned to Deiphobos for another, his brother had vanished. It was then that Hector knew Athena had tricked him and that his patron deities had abandoned him. Similarly, Jesus' disciples fled for safety, leaving him to face his fate alone. Those at the foot of the cross and those crucified with him taunted him, and when darkness engulfed the earth for three hours Jesus thought his God had forsaken him. Just as Deiphobus failed to come to Hector's aid, Elijah failed to aid Jesus. Compare also the deaths of the two heroes, in which the departing soul or spirit shouted.

*Iliad* 22.362–63

[A]nd *his soul,* flying from his
limbs, went *to Hades, bewailing her fate.*

Mark 15:37

Then Jesus *gave a loud cry*
and *expired.*

The Trojans mourned Hector's death as though their city had been destroyed "from top to bottom"; when Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent "from top to bottom." The death of each hero anticipates the death of a city: Troy or Jerusalem.

Achilles and the centurion both gloated that their victim, thought by some to be divine, now was dead. Achilles gloated that he slew "that man the Trojan glorified in their city like a god." The centurion mocked Jesus when he saw him die: "Truly this man was God's son!" The Trojans watched these horrendous events from afar, from the walls of the cities, and three Trojan women lifted their laments. Three women watched Jesus' death "from afar."

*Iliad* 24 provided Mark his model for Jesus' burial. The following parallels are particularly impressive. The right-hand column reproduces Mark's account of Jesus' burial verbatim, and almost every motif parallels the burial of Hector.

*Iliad* 24

Priam, king of Troy, set out at night

Mark 15:42–16:2

When it was late, and since it was the day of
Preparation, that is, the day before the

to rescue the body of his son, Hector,
from his murderer, Achilles.
The journey was dangerous. He entered
Achilles' abode, and asked for the body
of Hector.
Achilles was amazed that Priam dared
to enter his very home.
Achilles sent two soldiers to get the
ransom and summoned maidservants to
"wash and anoint him [ἀλεῖψαϛ]."

Hector's body had been saved from
desecration.
"So when the maids had bathed and
anointed the body sleek with olive oil
and wrapped it round and round in a
braided battle-shirt and handsome
battle-cape, then Achilles himself lifted it
and placed it upon a bier."
[Hector's bones would be placed in an
ossuary, buried in the ground, and covered
with stones.]
[Priam left with the body at night, and
brought it to Troy for a fitting burial.]
Cassandra was the first to see Priam
coming with the bier in the wagon.
Three women led in the lament:
Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen.

After elaborate preparations,
they burned Hector's body at dawn.

sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a
distinguished member of the council,
who was also himself waiting expectantly
for the kingdom of God,

dared to go to Pilate
and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate was amazed that he might
already be dead;
and summoning the centurion, he asked him
whether he had been dead for some time.
[A woman earlier had anointed Jesus.]
When he learned from the centurion that
he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.
[Jesus' rapid death and burial saved the
corpse from desecration.]
Then Joseph bought a linen cloth,
and taking down the body, wrapped it
in the linen cloth

and placed it in a tomb that had been
hewn out of the rock.
He then rolled a stone against the door of the
tomb.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of
Joses saw where the body was laid.
When the sabbath was over, Mary
Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James,
and Salome bought spices, so that they
might go and anoint [ἀλείψωσον] him.
And very early on the first day of the week,
when the sun had risen, they went to
the tomb.

It is no accident that Mark identified Joseph of Arimathea, the namesake of Jesus' father, as his imitation of Priam, nor is it coincidental that one of the women at

the tomb is a Mary, the mother of James and Joses. Jesus' mother, Mary, also was the mother of a James and a Joses. One might have expected Joseph of Nazareth to have provided a tomb for his son and Mary to have cared for the body, just as Priam and Hecuba did in the epic. Instead, these tasks fell to their namesakes. Those who did the will of Jesus' true father, these were his father and mother.

Mark's account of the empty tomb borrowed not only from the burial of Hector, but also from the burial of Elpenor at the beginning of *Odyssey* 12. Odysseus's crew buried Elpenor with great sorrow, but Mark's Elpenor character, the young man, witnessed to Jesus' resurrection. Hector and Elpenor died and their souls descended to Hades; Jesus — and symbolically the naked young man — died, but their bodies were raised and glorified, just as Jesus had been glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration. Like Odysseus, Jesus returned from Hades alive. The density and frequent agreement in order between Mark and the epics surely issue from conscious and extensive imitation.

Criterion five, distinctiveness, pertains to peculiarities in the model that reappear in the imitation. Matthew and Luke frequently renarrate Mark's stories with epic parallels, and they frequently omit the very oddities that linked them to Homer. These later omissions cannot prove that Mark imitated the epics, but they do show that two of his earliest readers found peculiar the same motifs I have attributed to mimesis.

For example, no other gospel shares to the same degree Mark's fascination with the "Sea" of Galilee or things nautical. Homer and Mark both have their heroes falling asleep as they sail with a flotilla of several ships and wake when a storm forms. Matthew and Luke both retell the tale, but they omit Mark's reference to "other boats." Odysseus and Jesus both confront indomitable savages living in caves. Matthew gives his own version of Mark's story but deletes the reference to "Legion," a possible transform of Homer's "Nobody." Gone too is the peculiar discussion between the Gerasene demoniac on land and Jesus, already on ship, a retention of the conversation between land-bound Polyphemus and Odysseus, who had sailed away. The transfigurations of Odysseus and Jesus both involve deities who adorn them in bleached garments, "such as no fuller on earth could bleach them."[16] Neither Matthew nor Luke retains a reference to a heavenly launderer. Odysseus and Jesus both ordered those who witnessed their transfigurations to tell no one what they had seen, a command missing in Luke's account. When Odysseus enters the city of the Phaeacians, he looks around in amazement at the marvelous buildings and miraculous plants, including trees that bore figs year round. Similarly, Mark's Jesus enters the temple, looks about in apparent amazement, and later curses a fig tree because it bore no fruit, even though "it was not the season for figs." Neither Matthew nor Luke retains Jesus' looking about the temple. Luke transforms the cursing of the fig tree into a

parable, and Matthew, though keeping the episode, will have nothing to do with Mark's statement that "it was not the season for figs." The name of Odysseus's old nurse, Eurycleia, anticipates the "far-flung renown" of the woman who anoints the Marcan Jesus, but not the woman who anoints Jesus according to Luke; he says nothing concerning her subsequent fame. Matthew says nothing whatever about the disciples following a water carrier to the upper room, a scene Mark borrowed from the story of the Laestrygonians. Homer's Odysseus ironically loses his desire to live when he learns he must go to Hades. With similar irony, Mark's Jesus is "grieved unto death" because he must die. Luke's Jesus, confident in the face of death, demonstrates no such ironic grief. The youth who fled naked at Jesus' arrest appears only in Mark; Matthew and Luke deleted him from the story completely. The youth who appeared in the Marcan empty tomb was promoted to an angel in Matthew and two angels in Luke and John. In other words, the parallels between Mark's young men and Homer's Elpenor obtain to no other gospel. Other distinctive traits shared by the *Odyssey* and Mark include bungling traveling companions, secretive heroes, and prognosticating trees.

Mark was no slave to the *Odyssey,* he emulated it (the criterion of interpretability). Jesus trumps Odysseus. Homer's hero awoke in the middle of a storm and held on for dear life waiting for calm; Mark's hero awoke and stilled the troubled sea, like a Homeric deity. Odysseus left Polyphemus blind; Jesus left the Gerasene demoniac cured of his possession. Odysseus told flabbergasted Telemachus he was no god, just his father; a voice from heaven told the flabbergasted disciples that Jesus was the Son of God. Odysseus left Tiresias in Hades still blind; Jesus restored Bartimaeus's sight and allowed him to travel with him. Odysseus predicted his quiet return to his estate; Jesus predicted his return to the whole world in a cosmic display of splendor. Odysseus unwittingly sent two of his comrades to their deaths on a cannibal's table; Jesus knowingly sent two of his disciples to find an upper room, where he would offer his own body and blood for his followers. Odysseus visited Hades and returned, never having died; Jesus actually died and was raised back to life.

Mark also emulated minor characters from the *Odyssey.* James and John, Mark's answer to Castor and Polydeuces, were denied special arrangements in the hereafter, unlike the Dioscuri, who alternately shared a single eternal life. Eurycleia found the fame implied by her name in the woman whose anointing would be remembered wherever the gospel was preached. Elpenor's tragic fate, eternal confinement to Hades, is undone in the glorification of the young man in the empty tomb.

Many ancient narratives tell of the deaths and burials of heroes, but those of Hector and Jesus share several distinctive traits. Hector and Jesus both complain that their protecting gods had abandoned them. Neither Deiphobus nor Elijah came to help the hero when summoned at their violent deaths. The deaths of both

heroes anticipate the falls of cities. Like Achilles gloating over the corpse of the one the Trojans glorified as a god, the centurion gloated over the corpse of the putative Son of God. Few ancient burials required courageous rescues of a corpse at nightfall, as with the corpses of Hector and Jesus.

Mark's indebtedness to the *Iliad* also helps explain the function of the taunts of Jesus' foes and the gloat of the centurion. The divine preservation of Hector's corpse from dogs, birds, and desiccation sheds light on the speed of Jesus' demise and interment, and the laments of the three Trojan women illumine the role of the three women at Jesus' tomb.

Mark not only imitated the death and burial of Hector, he emulated them. Unlike Hector, wrongly considered a god by the Trojans, Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The epic ends with a tragic and permanent death; the Gospel ends with the triumph of Jesus over death. Unlike the three Trojan women, the three women in Mark discovered their beloved had escaped his tomb.

Unless these criteria are flawed or applied inappropriately, one conclusion seems inescapable: Mark imitated Homeric epic and expected his readers to recognize it. This in no way denies Mark's indebtedness also to tradition, written sources, or Jewish scriptures, though it necessarily diminishes the extent of such dependence.

If this approach is correct, its implications for gospel research are enormous. In the first place, it secures Mark's priority among the Synoptics. Surely it is easier to imagine Mark borrowing from Homer elements that Matthew and Luke allowed to drift from their poetic moorings than to imagine Mark bending material from Matthew and Luke to conform with the epic. Furthermore, it strongly suggests the dependence of the Fourth Gospel on the Synoptics, for several of the stories Mark generated from the epics also appear in John, such as the walking on water, the anointing of Jesus by a woman, the cleansing of the temple, the prayer at Gethsemane, and much of the crucifixion and burial.

The reading of Mark proposed here also locates the primary cultural context of the Gospel in Greek religious tradition, not in Judaism. This is not to deny Mark's Jewish concerns or the influence of the Septuagint. Like many ancient narratives, the earliest gospel was eclectic in its dependence on literary models; Mark was an equal-opportunity imitator. Nonetheless, the bulk of the narrative issues from emulation of Greek epic. None of these three implications—Marcan priority, Johannine dependence on the Synoptics, or Greek cultural context—is new. In fact, they have been accepted by many if not most New Testament scholars for decades. Two other implications, however, are more radical.

This method, if correct, will require a reassessment of the adequacy of form criticism for describing the creation of gospel stories. Like Athena, born full-grown and armed from the head of Zeus, the narratives discussed in this book seem to have been born fully developed from classical poetry. It is entirely possi-

ble that before Mark picked up his quill no one had heard of Jesus stilling the sea, manifesting his glory to three disciples, sending disciples to follow a water carrier, or agonizing all night about his death. Homer, not history or tradition, explains the Gerasene demoniac, the anointing woman, the fleeing naked youth, Joseph of Arimathea, the women who came to anoint Jesus, and the youth sitting in the tomb. This is not to deny the historicity of other information in Mark or the legitimacy of form criticism for describing the origins and transmission of other narratives, but it is a reminder that the earliest evangelist was no mere editor; he was an artist uninhibited in his creation of theological fiction. Mark not only handed on tradition; more than anyone else in the early church with the possible exception of Luke, he created it.

Second, the identification of mimesis in Mark suggests a radical shift in hermeneutics, a reorienting from history or tradition to aesthetics. Mark crafted a myth to make the memory of Jesus relevant to the catastrophes of his day. The recent fall of Jerusalem, the failure of triumphalistic prophecies, and the carnage and probable deaths of his coreligionists prompted this daring artistic response. No narrative from the ancient world was more adaptable to this task than Homer's *Odyssey,* the story of another suffering wise man who, after a long absence, returned to punish the wicked and reward the faithful. Mark borrowed from the ending of the *Iliad,* the death and burial of Hector, another suffering hero, to narrate the death and burial of Jesus. He thus imitated, adapted, and transformed Homer's epics — as well as biblical texts and oral traditions — and the result is one of the most powerful, compelling, and influential narratives in the history of literature. To mistake Mark's fiction for early Christian reality, whether historical or traditional, is to slight his enormous and enduring contribution to theology. To appreciate him fully is to accept him as an artist.

These Marcan myths became constitutive of early Christian reality, just as myth is constitutive of the reality of every major religious tradition. Such traditions are not fixed and static but externally porous, internally plastic, multiple, and continuously renegotiated clusters of texts, symbols, and practices. By replacing ancient Greek myths with myths of his own, Mark was doing what he was supposed to do: adapting cultural monuments to address new realities. Religious transformation is in large part a competition of myths. The relevance of Mark for contemporary Christians not only resides in the final results of his effort — the text of the Gospel — but also in his creative, transvaluing literary activity as such. A significant aspect of theology always has been the transvaluation of traditional texts, symbols, and practices to address changing realities. "Gospel truth" is not a deposit of historically reliable data concerning Jesus but a process of generating more humane, ethical, beautiful, and inspiring myths.

# *Appendix 1*

## *Homer's Story of Odysseus*

Homer's telling of Odysseus's tale goes something like this.[1] While his only child, Telemachus, was still an infant, Odysseus left his wife Penelope and his beloved Ithaca to join other Achaean warriors in the Trojan War. After the war, he sailed for home, but his crew failed to complete their returns, or nostoi, because of their folly and the wrath of Poseidon, the god of the sea. The goddess Calypso detained Odysseus for years as a love pet on her island, Ogygia. Twenty years had elapsed between his departure and the epic's opening mise-en-scène. Because of Odysseus's long absence, Penelope and Telemachus, now a young man, increasingly despaired of his return. Over a hundred men vied for Penelope's hand and banqueted continuously, threatening ruin to his once fabled treasure.

The twin crises of Penelope and Odysseus would have continued had not Athena intervened to her father Zeus, who then ordered Calypso to free her ward. Athena herself, disguised as a mortal, appeared to Telemachus, promising to escort him by ship to Pylos and Sparta, where he could inquire of Nestor and Menelaus, recently returned from the war, concerning his father's nostos. On discovering Telemachus's departure, the suitors schemed to kill him on his return (Books 1–2). Nestor and Menelaus knew little of Odysseus's whereabouts, but they did inspire Telemachus with his father's *kleos*, "heroic renown," and with the example of Orestes, who had avenged the death of his father, Agamemnon, victim of the treacherous Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus (Books 3–4).

As these events unfolded on the Peloponnesus, Hermes strapped on his sandals, which bore him over the waves, and flew to Calypso's island to demand Odysseus's release. The hero, a skilled carpenter, built a small boat, but before he had sailed far, Poseidon sent a storm against him, shattering the boat and sending him into the drink. He finally washed ashore at Scheria, the island home of the Phaeacians (Book 5). According to Books 6–8, Odysseus delicately worked his way into the favor of the Phaeacian royal family, and in Books 9–12 he regaled them with his adventures, the epic's most memorable section.

Odysseus told the Phaeacians that he had left Troy with an armada of twelve ships, and on their way they sacked the city of the Cicones, losing six comrades doing so. This was but the first of many woes Odysseus and his band would suffer. Gales and contrary currents thwarted the armada's way and drove them to the land of the Lotus-eaters and the Cyclopes, one-eyed ogres. Odysseus and twelve comrades found themselves trapped in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, obstructed by a rock so massive that only the giant himself could budge it. Polyphemus ate four of Odysseus's companions before the hero could inebriate him and blind his only eye. When the giant pushed back the rock to send his sheep to pasture, the Achaeans clung to their undersides and thus escaped.

Odysseus and his ships then sailed to the island of Aeolus, the wind god, who offered the hero a bag of winds to help him on his voyage home. Odysseus failed to tell his companions what the bag contained, and he never opened it because of favorable winds. Just as they approached Ithaca, Odysseus, weary from sailing, slept, while his suspicious crew opened the sack. Instead of finding the treasure they expected, they unleashed a hurricane that drove them back to the island of Aeolus. From there the armada sailed into the port of the Laestrygonians, cannibals who slew so many of the crew that only Odysseus, a few comrades, and a single ship survived. Later they drew their ship ashore the island of Circe, a witch whose drugs changed sailors into swine. With the help of Hermes' herb, Odysseus drank Circe's potion but kept his wits and forced her to restore his crew to their former condition. The Achaeans stayed with Circe for a year, until their longing for home again overcame them. Circe treated them to a marvelous last supper, and, while the crew slept, took Odysseus to her bedroom to tell him that his only hope of returning home was to brave the netherworld and there to find Tiresias, the blind prophet, who alone knew the way. Odysseus then aroused his sleeping comrades, including a youth named Elpenor, who had chosen to sleep on the roof to ventilate a hangover from Circe's wine. Still groggy when Odysseus woke him, he fell from the roof and died.

Odysseus and company left Circe's palace and Elpenor's unburied corpse to sail for the edge of the earth, the portals of Hades. He performed the appropriate sacrifices, and the souls of the dead came to drink the blood. The first soul to meet him was Elpenor's, who begged the hero to return to Circe's island and bury his corpse. Next, Odysseus spoke with Tiresias, who, though blind, recognized the identity of his interlocutor and proceeded to warn him of the dangers and sufferings awaiting him, not only at sea but also at home. He and his crew must avoid inflaming Poseidon's wrath by leaving unharmed the cattle of Helios, the Sun.

Odysseus and his crew returned to Circe's island and, at dawn, buried Elpenor's body. Having bid adieu to the witch, they set out again, and most escaped the deadly Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis before arriving at the island of Helios, where Odysseus forced his crew to swear never to slay the sacred cattle. For a month storms raged at sea, keeping the ship at anchor. Finally, Eurylochus, the second-in-command, convinced his starving companions to slay a few cattle. They feasted for six days; when the weather improved, they set out again for home, but no sooner had they lost sight of land when Zeus, to punish them, sent a ferocious storm, sinking the ship, drowning the crew, and ultimately throwing Odysseus ashore on Ogygia, Calypso's island home.

When the Phaeacian king and queen heard of Odysseus's sufferings, they sent him home with extravagant gifts aboard one of their ships. Odysseus slept at the stern, and the Phaeacian sailors deposited him, still asleep, on an Ithacan beach.

When the hero awoke, Athena informed him that he was home at last and disguised him as an old man, so that no one would recognize him. Instead of going directly to his palace, Odysseus found hospitality in the humble hut of his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. While Odysseus sojourned with Eumaeus, Athena summoned Telemachus home from Sparta and protected him from the suitors, who had lain in wait for him.

After Telemachus's return, Odysseus selectively revealed his identity, or other characters recognized him on their own. He revealed himself first to Telemachus, then he was found out by his old dog, Argos, and his nurse Eurycleia, who discovered his scar while washing his feet. After testing the loyalty of two servants, Eumaeus and Philoetius, he revealed his identity also to them. At the beginning of Book 22, Odysseus dramatically revealed himself to the suitors, and in short order he and his allies slew them. Not until the slaughter was complete did Odysseus reveal himself to Penelope and his father, Laertes.

*Note*

1. Stephen V. Tracy provides a useful overview of the epic in *The Story of the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

# *Appendix 2*

### *The Beginnings of the* Odyssey *and the Gospel of Mark*

The Gospel "according to Mark" must have acquired this title at an early date, but it almost certainly is not original to the book. The reader's first encounter with the anonymous work would have been with the phrase "Beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, Son of God [Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ]."[1] Although it is grammatically possible to link this phrase to what follows, one probably should view it independently as a title. Unfortunately, it is impossible to be certain what the evangelist meant by the word ἀρχή, "beginning," which could refer to the content of the entire work as the "beginning of the gospel." It is more likely that "the gospel [τοῦ εὐαγγελίου]" refers to the content of the book, in which case, ἀρχή would refer to the opening verses, including the prophecy of Isaiah concerning John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism by John, his temptation, and perhaps even the beginning of his proclamation in Galilee.

In any case, the opening line introduces the book as a narrative about an individual, like the title ἡ Ὀδύσσεια, "concerning Odysseus." The epic begins, "Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices." Vergil imitated this title by entitling his epic *Aeneid,* "concerning Aeneas," which begins, "Arms I sing and the man." The openings of the *Odyssey* and the *Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God* both notify the reader that the narrative will concern the careers of these individuals.

The first ten lines of the epic are an epiclesis, an invocation of the Muse that introduces the hero's sufferings. He was "driven far astray" from his course on his return

home. "[M]any the woes he suffered [πολλὰ . . . πάθεν ἄλγεα] in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades."[2] Similarly, Mark invokes the prophet Isaiah as a witness to Jesus' ὁδός, "journey" or "way." "As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way [ὁδόν]'; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way [ὁδόν] of the Lord, make his paths straight.' "[3] Altogether, Mark employs the word ὁδός sixteen times in the Gospel, and when applied to Jesus' travels, it always pertains to his return to Jerusalem, where he will suffer.[4] Jesus' ὁδός, then, is his journey to death. Although Homer's favorite word for Odysseus's voyage was νόστος, as in the epiclesis,[5] he also used ὁδός, especially when referring to the hero's journey to the netherworld.[6] The journeys of Odysseus and Jesus both involve suffering and death, and the comrades of both heroes prove themselves unreliable "on the way." Both heroes return from death unscathed and victorious.

After the epiclesis, Homer narrates a *theōn agora,* "divine council," held without Poseidon, the only Olympian opposed to the hero's return. Having decided to assist Odysseus, Zeus sent Athena flying to Ithaca. "[S]he went darting [ἀΐξασα] down [κατ'] from the heights of Olympus" and stood "at the outer gate of Odysseus" in the guise of old Mentes.[7] "The godlike Telemachus was the first to see her." Although the suitors saw her, only Odysseus's son spoke with her. Athena/Mentes, pretending not to know who Telemachus was, asked the youth to tell her "whether indeed, tall as you are, you are the son of Odysseus himself. Wondrously like his are your head and beautiful eyes." Telemachus no longer was even certain that he was Odysseus's son: "My mother says that I am his child; but I do not know this, for never yet did any man know his parentage of his own knowledge." The disguised goddess reassured him that he had a noble ancestry and that his father would indeed return, but even if he should not, Telemachus must play the man and rid his house of the suitors. She advised him to visit Pylos and Sparta, Nestor and Menelaus, to see if these two heroes of the Trojan War had any news of Odysseus's whereabouts. Just as suddenly as she had appeared, she vanished, "flying upward as a bird [ὄρνις δ' ὡς]; and in his heart she put strength and courage, and made him think of his father even more than before. And in his mind he marked what had happened and marvelled, for he suspected that she was a god; and at once he went among the suitors, a godlike man [ἰσόθεος]."[8] Telemachus strode among the suitors like a god because of Athena's reassuring visitation.

Telemachus immediately demonstrated uncharacteristic moxie in challenging the suitors, who in turn prayed that Zeus thwart the young man from becoming a king (βασιλῆα) of Ithaca, his birthright. Although Telemachus would like to rule as king (βασιλευέμεν), he would give way to any of the "other kings [βασιλῆες] of the Achaeans" in Ithaca, if he could be lord (ἄναξ) of his father's house and slaves. A leader of the suitors ostensibly conceded, all the while intending to oust the youth from his own home. "[T]his matter surely lies on the knees of the gods, who of the Achaeans shall be king [βασιλεύσει] in seagirt Ithaca; but as for your possessions, keep them yourself, and be lord [ἀνάσσοις] in your own house."[9]

Mark narrates Jesus' baptism and temptation as follows: "In those days Jesus came

from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven. 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' "[10] "And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."[11] The epic and the Gospel both begin with a young man learning of his paternity by means of a flying messenger. In both stories, other characters are present, but the communication comes to the hero alone. Both young men gain courage from a god to confront their foes: Telemachus confronted the suitors, and Jesus withstood Satan.

The parallels with the epic continue after Jesus' temptation, where one reads the following economical transition to Jesus' career in Galilee. "Now after John was arrested, Jesus come to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom [βασιλεία] of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.' "[12] Here the reader learns for the first time that John had run afoul of the political authorities, and by association, Jesus might, too. Jesus himself left for Galilee and, despite potential danger, announced the advent of the kingdom of God. In other words, both Telemachus and Jesus, endangered by the powers-that-be but emboldened by heavenly messengers, staked out their claims to kingdoms as only sons of their royal fathers.

By advancing these parallels between the descents of Athena and of the Spirit, I by no means imply that the earliest evangelist contrived the entire account of Jesus' baptism. On the contrary, John the Baptist almost certainly did baptize Jesus. Q probably narrated the baptism of Jesus, although the accounts of Matthew and Luke agree so closely with Mark's that certainty concerning the reconstruction of Q is impossible.

The placement of these scenes at the beginning of both works, the empowering of young men by a heavenly messenger speaking to them of their fathers, and the immediate demonstration of that empowerment to their opponents in a dispute over kingship suggest Mark's mimesis.

*Notes*

1. Mark 1:1. It should be noted, however, that no consensus exists concerning how best to punctuate Mark 1:1 and 2, and some manuscripts omit υἱοῦ θεοῦ.

2. *Odyssey* 1.4–5. Vergil's opening lines likewise emphasize the hero's sufferings.

3. Mark 1:2–3.

4. Mark 8:27, 9:33 and 34, 10:17, 32, and 52, and 11:8.

5. *Odyssey* 1:5; cf. 1.9.

6. *Odyssey* 10.490–93, 501–2, 539–40, and 563–65.

7. *Odyssey* 1.102–3 and 105. Line 102 repeats a common Homeric formula used exclusively of Athena, except for *Iliad* 24.121, where it is used of Thetis (*Iliad* 2.167, 4.74, 7.19, and 22.187, and *Odyssey* 24.488). Homer's use of the participle ἀΐξασα suggests the flight of a bird, a frequent image for Athena in Homer. The verbs ἀΐσσω and ἀναΐσσω are used for

birds in *Odyssey* 2.154 and 15.164. When Athena left Telemachus she flew like a bird (1.139). Athena flies like a bird also in *Iliad* 7.59 and *Odyssey* 3.371–72 and 22.239–40; cf. *Iliad* 14.286–91 and *Odyssey* 5.351–53. See Franz Dirlmeier, *Die Vogelgestalt homerischer Götter*, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie des Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historisch Klasse (Heidelberg: Winter, 1967). Scholars debate whether Athena resembles the flight of birds or actually takes on their appearance.

8. *Odyssey* 1.320–24.

9. *Odyssey* 1.386–402.

10. Telemachus, too, is called a beloved son (ἀγαπητός) in *Odyssey* 2.365, 4.727 and 817, and 5.18–19.

11. Mark 1:9–13.

12. Mark 1:14–15.

# *Appendix 3*

## *The Endings of the* Iliad *and the Gospel of Mark*

The *Iliad* and the Gospel of Mark both end with the death and burial of a hero, but the end of neither book is the end of the story, for each anticipates events that would transpire after the burial of the hero. For example, even though Homer did not narrate the sacking of Troy, throughout the epic he provided predictions about what would happen after Hector's death. Priam, with Apollo's help, will slay Achilles outside Troy's walls, at the Scaean gate, guaranteeing the leader of the Myrmidons eternal renown. Without Achilles, the Achaeans will breach Troy's walls and inflict destruction with help from Athena. Priam will perish; Hector's infant son, Astyanax, heir to the throne, will be thrown over the walls to his death; while Andromache, Hector's wife, will sail home with some Greek, a spoil of war. Of the royal family, only Aeneas will survive and rule Troy. The Achaeans will slay most of the men, some of the children, and haul off as their own many Trojan women. The surviving Achaeans will leave for home, and ultimately the gods will cast the Greek fortifications into the sea, removing physical evidence of their presence. Homer created anticipation of these future events through a combination of omniscient narration, divine prophecies, and articulated Trojan fears. When Hector's bones burn, the reader knows the worst for the Trojans is yet to come. The ending of the epic is not the end of the story, and the reader is fully aware of it.[1]

The open-endedness of the epic launched a thousand sequels.[2] The first was the *Odyssey,* which told not only of the nostos of Odysseus, but events related to the fall of

Troy and the nostoi of other heroes. The *Odyssey* soon was followed by other sequels: *Aithiopis, Sack of Troy* (*Iliou Persis*), *Little Iliad,* and Stesichorus's *Iliou Persis* and *Nostoi.* Later epics, too, completed Homer's tale, most notably Vergil's *Aeneid* and Quintus Smyrnaeus's *Posthomerica.*[3] Euripides fulfilled some prophecies of the epic in his *Hecuba, Andromache,* and *Trojan Women.*[4] The projections of future events left unnarrated at the end of the *Iliad* were a favorite mine, to which ancient authors returned time and again.

Although Mark ends his narrative with the flight of the women from tomb, he had used Jesus' powers of prediction throughout the Gospel to indicate what would happen after his death. Jesus had gone to Galilee, where his disciples were supposed to see him, but, because of the women's silence, they never got that message and presumably never left Jerusalem. Even so, the disciples would become "fishers of humans," proclaiming, among other things, Jesus' glorification on the Mount of Transfiguration after his resurrection.

According to Mark 13, Jesus predicted four periods after his death. The "beginning of the birth pangs" would consist of "wars and rumors of wars," international strife, earthquakes, famines, the arrival of false teachers, and the deception of many of Jesus' followers. Jesus told four of his disciples—and Mark his readers—that during this period some of his followers would be brought to trial before synagogues and kings. Family members would "betray each other to death," and believers would be hated.[5]

The second period, the "suffering" per se, would begin with the appearance of "the desolating sacrilege," probably a Roman general, "set up where he ought not to be." "False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect." During that time there would be suffering "such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be."[6] God himself would bring about the destruction as a punishment on the Jewish authorities who killed Jesus. The temple would be in ruins, "not one stone on another."

The third period, "after the suffering," would be a time of missionizing and waiting for Jesus' return.[7] God's vineyard would have been given to others, and the Gospel would be preached throughout the world.[8] It was during this period that Mark wrote the Gospel. Some of Jesus' associates would still be alive when he finally returns as the Son of Man with a display of cosmic wonders; "then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."[9] This event would inaugurate the final period, the kingdom of God.

Mark's anticipation of events to transpire after the conclusion of his gospel encouraged several extensions of his story into the future, each of which altered his interpretation of them. The most extensive completions of Mark's story came from the pen of Luke, who not only revised Mark's ending, including appearances of Jesus, but added a sequel, the Acts of the Apostles.

These correlations between the *Iliad* and Mark surely are no accident. Both works end with the death of a hero that symbolized the fall of a city. Even though the conclusions of both works concern the fates of the heroes, the reader is able to anticipate several events that would transpire thereafter, including the deaths of the cities that

buried the heroes. The open-endedness of each work encouraged others to complete the story.

*Notes*

1. For a discussion of the anticipation of events to transpire after the epic, see George Eckel Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 28–32.

2. See the expansive discussion by Gantz, *Myth*, 617–717.

3. A certain Triphiodorus wrote a brief epic entitled the *Capture of Troy*. See also the Trojan tales of Dictys and Dares.

4. See also Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*. Herodotus's *Histories* begin with the sack of Troy (1.2–5).

5. Mark 13:5–13a.

6. Mark 13:14–22.

7. Mark 13:24.

8. Mark 14:9; cf. 13:10.

9. Mark 13:27.

# *Abbreviations*

The following abbreviations appear throughout the Notes section.

| | |
|---|---|
| *AAMt* | *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* |
| *AC* | *Acta classica* |
| *ANRW* | *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* |
| BETL | Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium |
| BETTA | Beiträge zur evangelische Theologie. Theologische Abhandlungen |
| *CBQ* | *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* |
| *ETL* | *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* |
| *ExpTim* | *Expository Times* |
| GE | Gregory of Tours, epitome of *The Acts of Andrew* |
| *HTR* | *Harvard Theological Review* |
| *JBL* | *Journal of Biblical Literature* |
| JSNTSup | Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplements |
| *LIMC* | *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library |
| LXX | Septuagint |
| *NTStud* | *New Testament Studies* |
| *PG* | *Patrologia Graeca* (J. P. Migne) |
| *PL* | *Patrologia Latina* (J. P. Migne) |
| SBLDS | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series |

| | |
|---|---|
| *TU* | Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |
| *ZNW* | *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* |
| *ZPE* | *Zeitschrift für Philologie und Epigraphik* |

# *Notes*

## *Chapter 1. Mark and Mimesis*

1. *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982).

2. See K. Thraede, s.v. "Epos," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (1962): 1039–41; P. W. A. Th. van der Laan, "Imitation créative dans le *Carmen Paschale* de Sédulius," in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays,* ed. J. Den Boeft and A. Hilhorst, 135–66 (especially 151–65), Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 22 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993); and Kristoffel Demoen, "The Attitude towards Greek Poetry in the Verse of Gregory Nazianzen," *Early Christian Poetry,* 235–52. Other early Christian imitations of Homer include the *Vision of Dorotheus,* the lost epics and plays by Apollinarius of Laodicea (according to Sozomen *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.18), the recasting of the Gospel of John in hexameters by Ps.-Nonnos of Panopolis, the poem *Hero and Leander* by Musaeus, and the hexameters by the empress Eudocia, including homerocentones on the life of Christ.

3. For example, Günter Glockmann, *Homer in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Justinus,* TU 105 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 57–58. For other discussions of Homer in the early church see Wilhelm Krause, *Die Stellung der frühchristlichen Autoren zur heidnischen Literatur* (Vienna: Herder, 1958); Günter Glockmann, "Homer in der christlichen Apologetik des zweiten Jahrhunderts," *Orpheus* 14 (1967): 33–40; Nicole Zeegers-Vander Vorst, *Les citations des poètes grecs chez les apologistes chrétiens du IIe siècle,* Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philologie 4.47 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972); Jean Pépin, "The Platonic and Christian Ulysses," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought,* ed. Dominic J. O'Meara, International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (Albany: State University of

New York, 1982), 3–18; Arthur J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture,* Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 26 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989); and Dennis R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer: "The Odyssey," Plato, and "The Acts of Andrew"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17–34.

4. Few scholars have followed Norman Perrin's claim that the gospel is sui generis "the unique literary creation of early Christianity" ("The Literary Gattung Gospel: Some Observations," *ExpTim* 82 [1970]: 4), but identifying generic antecedents has been to chase a chimera. Detlev Dormeyer supplies a detailed treatment of scholarship on the genre of Mark prior to 1982, except for contributions in languages other than German, which are obviously and lamentably invisible ("Evangelium als literarische Gattung und als theologischer Begriff. Tendezen und Aufgaben der Evangelienforschung im 20. Jahrhundert, mit einer Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums in seinem Verhältnis zur antike Biographie," *ANRW* 2.25.2:1543–81). See also Hubert Cancik in "Die Gattung Evangelium. Das Evangelium des Markus im Rahmen der antike Historiographie," in *Markus-Philologie. Historische, literargeschichtliche und stilistische Untersuchungen zum zweiten Evangelium,* ed. H. Cancik, WUNT 33 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1984), 87–90; David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment,* Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 17–76; Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1989), 48–79, and "The Gospel in Greco-Roman Culture," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory,* ed. Regina M. Schwartz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 258–75; Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography,* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3–106; Christopher Bryan, *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in Its Literary and Cultural Setting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9–64; and Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1–22.

5. The rhetor Quintilian suggested that historical writing "may be regarded as a kind of prose poem" (*Institutio oratoria* 10.1.31; cf. Strabo *Geography* 1.2.6).

6. Stanley F. Bonner, describing ancient elementary education, wrote: "The first step is certain. Whether their master taught both languages or only Greek, the poet whom boys began to study first and foremost was Homer. . . . Petronius, Quintilian and Pliny are all unequivocal about Homer's priority" (*Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977], 212–13). See also H.-I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956). I discuss the poet's role in Greek education in *Christianizing Homer,* 17–22.

7. *Republic* 10.606e.

8. Roger A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt,* 2d edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965).

9. J. Bompaire, *Lucien écrivain. Imitation et création,* Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 190 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1958), 43. For discussions of mimesis see especially George Converse Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace: A Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1920; reprint Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), 25–63; Richard McKeon, "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in

Antiquity," in *Critics and Criticism,* ed. Ronald Salmon Crane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 147–75; Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 144–76; Bompaire, *Lucien,* 33–154; B. P. Reardon, *Courants littéraires grecs des II^e et III^e siècles après J.-C.,* Annales littéraires de l'Université de Nantes 3 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971), 3–11; Elaine Fantham, "Imitation and Decline: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in the First Century after Christ," *Classical Philology* 73 (1978): 102–16; Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 28–80; Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry,* Roman Literature and Its Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Thomas Louis Brodie, "Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts as a Partial Guide to Luke's Use of Sources," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar,* ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 17–26. For representative ancient discussions of mimesis see Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 10.2 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus *On Imitation.* D. A. Russell lists the principles for a successful mimesis according to Longinus ("De imitatione," in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature,* ed. D. A. West and A. J. Woodman [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 16).

10. *Institutio oratoria* 10.2.1. See also Cicero *De oratore* 2.22.90–92. According to George A. Kennedy, "[R]hetorical *mimêsis* or imitation . . . became such a major interest of teachers of rhetoric that in later Hellenistic times it tended to overshadow everything else" (*The Art of Persuasion in Greece* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963], 332).

11. Eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 9.17–20, 22–24, and 35–38.

12. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Sosates the Jewish Homer," *HTR* 74 (1981): 391–96.

13. A. H. M. Kessels and P. W. Van der Horst, "The Vision of Dorotheus (Pap. Bodmer 29)," *Vigiliae christianae* 41 (1987): 314.

14. Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt,* American Studies in Papyrology 36 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997): #338 (third century C.E.) paraphrases *Iliad* 4.349–63, and #333 (second or third century C.E.) paraphrases *Iliad* 1.1–21 and contains a Coptic version of Ps. 46.3–10 as well as other writing exercises. For a fuller discussion of this important text, see P. J. Parsons, "A School-Book from the Sayce Collection," *ZPE* 6 (1970): 133–49.

See also the discussions of paraphrase in Peter Hermann, *Wahrheit und Kunst. Geschichtschreibung und Plagiat im klassischen Altertum* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1911), 429–34; Eduard Stemplinger, *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1912; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1990), 118–21 and 212–15; and Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity,* ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 16 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1985), 5–60. Thomas Hägg carefully compares Homeric epic, inter alia, with three Greek romances in *Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances: Studies of Chariton, Xenophon Ephesius, and Achilles Tatius,* Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet: Athen. 8.8 (Uppsala: Almquist & Wikells Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1971), 306–35.

Plato gave an example of just such an exercise by prosifying the beginning of the *Iliad* (*Republic* 3.393c–394.b). Aelius Aristides gave examples of Homeric paraphrases for other rhetoricians by rendering in prose *Iliad* 1.1–40 and *Odyssey* 9.425–36 (*Rhetorical Techniques* 1.14). See also Demetrius *On Style* 2.112–13. Demosthenes Thrax and Procopius

both wrote extensive paraphrases of the *Odyssey*. See also Seneca's reference to the paraphrase of Homer by Dorion (*Suasoriae* 1.12).

15. *Institutio oratoria* 10.5.4; cf. 1.9.2–3. See also Cicero *De oratore* 1.154. Dionysius of Halicarnassus argues for shared features between poetry and prose (*On Literary Composition* 20–25). Plutarch gave Homer credit for the creation of several prose literary forms, including the writing of history (*On the Life and Poetry of Homer* 6 and 74; cf. 213–16).

16. *On Poetry* 5.30.36–31.2 (Jensen, 67–69).

17. See especially Erich Kaiser, "Odyssee-Szenen als Topoi," *Museum Helveticum* 21 (1964): 109–36 and 197–224. G. W. Bowersock discusses first-century rewritings of Homer in *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 23–25: "Rewriting the Homeric stories was to become a fad" (23). Robert J. Ball provides a survey of the influence of scenes from the *Odyssey* in "The Popularity of Homer's *Odyssey* in Greek and Latin Literature," in *East Meets West: Homage to Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr.*, ed. Roger L. Hadlich and J. D. Ellsworth (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1988), 10–16.

18. Thomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 111.

19. A. M. Scarcella, "La technica dell'imitatione in Longo Sofista," *Giornale Italiana de filologia* 23 (1971): 1.34–59; Horatio C. R. Vella, "Some Novel Aspects in Homer's *Odyssey* and Longus," *Studi Italiani di filologia classica* 9 (1991): 148–62; M. Hubert McDermott, "The *Satyricon* as Parody of the *Odyssey* and Greek Romance," *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 8 (1983): 82–85; Stephen J. Harrison, "Some Odyssean Scenes in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi del testi classici* 25 (1990): 193–201; and Niklas Holzberg, "The *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* and the *Odyssey*," *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 3 (1989): 91–101. For a more expansive treatment of these ancient Odyssean hypertexts, see also MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer*, 6–10, 24–27, and 310–14; and Hägg, *Narrative Technique*, 306–35.

20. Fiske, *Lucilius*, 485; cf. Bompaire, *Lucien*, 80.

21. M. Z. Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος ομηρίζων," *Hellenika* 37 (1986): 3–25. Josephus states that one significant aspect of his mastery of Greek was diligence in the study of the poets (*Jewish War* 22.263). See also *Contra Apionem* 1.12 and 2.154–55, *Jewish War* 2.156, and *Antiquities* 19.91–92.

22. Bompaire, *Lucien*, 84. See Demetrius *On Style* 2.112–13; Horace *Ars poetica* 133–35 and *Epistle* 1.19.19–21; and Philodemus *On Poetry* 5.31.7–27 (Jensen, 69). Cicero encouraged paraphrase instead of word-for-word replications even when translating from Greek to Latin (*De optimo genere oratorium* 5.13–15). Quintilian gave precise instructions on how to teach the imitation of narrative to "those who are not yet ripe for the schools of rhetoric" so as to avoid servile dependence (*Institutio oratoria* 1.9.1–6). Hermogenes wrote a chapter on "the art of speaking without anyone perceiving that others or one's self had already said it."

23. Bompaire, *Lucien*, 82, citing Dionysius of Halicarnassus *On Imitation* frag. VI and Cicero *De inventione* 2.1–2.

24. Seneca *Epistle* 84.3–5 and 8–9.

25. Such emulations were common even in cases when authors occulted dependence. See Fiske, *Lucilius*, 38–39 and 43–46; and Bernard Kytzler, "Imitatio und aemulatio in der Thebais des Statius," *Hermes* 97 (1969): 209–32, with attention to emulations of the *Iliad*.

26. The most common hypertextual markers in the *Acts of Andrew* were proper nouns, such as Myrmidonia for the home of Myrmidons, Nicolaus of Sparta for Menelaus of Sparta, Varianus ("Fickle") of Macedonia for Zeus of Macedonian Olympus, Philopater ("Father-lover") for Orestes (who avenged his father, Agammemon), Leontius ("Lion-like") for Achilles, Alcman for Heracles (son of Alcmene), Trophime ("Suckled") for Atalanta (suckled by a bear), Anthimus ("Blossom") for Orpheus, and Lesbius ("Goblet") for Dionysus. Nearly every name in the *Acts* carries mythological significance.

27. For example, the raising of Jairus's daughter in Mark 5 imitates the raising of a woman's son in 2 Kings (Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium,* Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament [Frieburg: Herder, 1980], 1.298 and 313).

28. Hinds, *Allusion,* 23.

29. Hinds, 46.

30. Such memorization of Homer is abundantly attested in the ancient sources (e.g., Xenophon *Symposium* 3.5 and 4.6, and Plato's *Ion*).

31. Hinds, *Allusion,* 34.

32. For example, Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and Hinds, *Allusion,* 21–51.

33. M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus,* 2d ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 21.

34. Hinds, *Allusion,* 25.

35. Many philologians favor this criterion above all others. See, for example, Jeffrey Wills, *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15–41; and Kathleen Morgan, *Ovid's Art of Imitation: Propertius in the Amores,* Mnemosyne Supplements 47 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 3–4.

36. When possible I have used the Loeb Classical Library for translations of Homer and other nonbiblical ancient texts, the New Revised Standard Version for biblical texts. Often I deviate from both, providing my own translations, especially when doing so more clearly presents the Greek parallels between the epic and the Gospel.

37. I have published another version of this argument as "Luke's Eutychus and Homer's Elpenor: Acts 20:7–12 and *Odyssey* 10–12," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 1 (1994): 5–24.

38. *Odyssey* 10.552–60 (Fagles 608–17, altered).

39. *Odyssey* 11.72–78 (Fagles 79–87).

40. *Odyssey* 12.8–15 (Fagles 8–15).

41. *Odyssey* 10.522 and Acts 20:9.

42. *Odyssey* 10.559 (= 11.64) and Acts 20:9.

43. Luke's choice of τρίστεγον, "third story," here is particularly suggestive. It is a hapax not only in Luke-Acts, but also in the New Testament and in contemporary Christian literature. The related words στέγος, στέγη, τέγος, "roof," from which τρίστεγον derives, appear in Luke's writings only in Luke 7:6, where στέγη derives from Q (cf. Matt. 8:8). Luke prefers δῶμα when referring to a roof: Luke 5:19 (where he substitutes δῶμα for Mark's στέγη), 12:3 (Q), 17:31 (from Mark), and Acts 10:9. Therefore, τρίστεγον may well have derived from the τέγος in Homer.

44. *Odyssey* 11.55.

45. *Odyssey* 12.12.

46. *Odyssey* 12.10 and Acts 20:12.

47. *Paidagogos* 2.2.34.2, referring to *Odyssey* 10.560. Lucian quoted part of Odysseus's question to Elpenor in *Odyssey* 11.93 and called the line "the well-known words" (*Wisdom of Nigrinus* 17).

48. On Vergil's imitation and emulation of Elpenor, see especially Manfred Lossau, "Elpenor und Palinurus," *Weiner Studien* ns 14 (1980): 102–24. Georg Nicolaus Knauer argues that Elpenor also inspired the burial of the nurse Caieta in *Aeneid* 7.1–7 ("Vergil's *Aeneid* and Homer," *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, ed. S. J. Harrison [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990], 394–95).

49. *Republic* 614b.

50. *Republic* 614b–c.

51. *Republic* 621b.

52. *Divine Vengeance* 563d–567f. See also the story of Timarchus in *On the Sign of Socrates* 590a–592e.

53. Other literary imitations of Elpenor include Lucan *Civil War* 6.419–830, Silius Italicus *Punica* 13.395–468, and Heliodorus *Aethiopica* 6.14–15. Homer's Elpenor also seems to have influenced Sophocles' Polynices in *Antigone*, Horace's sailor in *Odes* 28–29, and Philostratus's account of an appearance of the soul of Achilles to Apollonius of Tyana (*Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.16).

54. Ἀλεξανδρεία ἡ ἐπὶ Τρῳάδι; see David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 69, 82–83, 472, 875, and 1334; and A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 85.

55. *Lives of the Caesars* 1.79. It is possible, but by no means certain, that Horace knew of this plan and opposed it in *Ode* 3.3.

56. The very fact that Luke records this story in Troas is surprising insofar as Luke had said nothing earlier about such converts, not even during Paul's earlier visit there (16:8–11; cf. 2 Cor. 2:12 and 2 Tim. 4:13).

57. *Odyssey* 10.76 and 11.61 and 80. When Ovid referred to this story, his single adjective for the lad was *miser*, "wretched," "unhappy" (*Tristia* 3.4.19).

58. Hans von Kamptz, *Homerische Personennamen. Sprachwissenschaftliche und historische Klassifikation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

59. Appendix 1 provides a précis of Homer's *Odyssey* that readers unfamiliar with this epic may wish to consult before proceeding.

### *Chapter 2. Carpenters Who Suffer Many Things*

1. Mark 13:1–2.

2. See S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church: A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A.D. 70 on Christianity*, 2d ed. (London: SPCK, 1957).

3. *Odyssey* 19.118 and 20.33. On Homer's vocabulary for Odysseus's suffering, see Ralph Hexter, *A Guide to the Odyssey: A Commentary on the English Translation of Robert Fitzgerald* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 4–5.

4. Halitherses (a prophet): "I said [to Odysseus] that after suffering many ills [κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντ'] and losing all his comrades he would come home . . . unknown to all" (*Odyssey* 2.174–75). Zeus: "On a stoutly bound raft, suffering woes [πήματα πάσχων], he

[Odysseus] may come" (5.33–35). Tiresias (a prophet): "You and your comrades may reach home, though suffering hardships [κακά περ πάσχοντες]" (11.104). Poseidon: "I just now declared that Odysseus should suffer many woes [κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντα] before he reached his home" (13.131–32). Athena (to Odysseus): "Tell no man of them all nor any woman that you have come back from your wanderings, but in silence endure your many griefs [πάσχειν ἄλγεα πολλά], and submit to the violence of men" (13.308–10). Helen: "I will prophesy as the immortals put it into my heart, and as I think it will be brought to pass. . . . Odysseus [shall] return to his home after many toils [κακὰ πολλὰ παθών]" (15.172–73 and 176–77).

5. *Odyssey* 5.223, 7.224, 8.155, 10.465, and 15.401.

6. Mark 8:31; cf, 9:30–32 and 10:32–34.

7. Matt. 27:19.

8. *Odyssey* 6.243, 8.14, 16.179, 183, and 200, 17.179–82, and 19.267 and 280.

9. See Alfred Heubeck et al., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988–92), 1.74 and 75.

10. William Bedell Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 97–100. See also Félix Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque,* Collection Budé (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1956), 105–9; and Pépin, "Platonic and Christian Ulysses," 3–5. Ragnar Höistad discusses the Cynic Odysseus in detail in *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Uppsala: Carl Bloms Boktryckeri A.-B., 1948), 94–102 and 196.

11. Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie. Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes,* 2d ed. (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1976), 121; cf. Epictetus *Dissertationes* (Arrian) 3.24.12–14 and 26.33–35, and Porphyry *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Odysseam* 2.4, 69.17, and 100.9.

12. *De constantia sapientis* 2.1.

13. Aelius Aristides 46.39; cf. 2.88, 96, 415, and 417, 24.7, 28.26–29 and 47, and 42.14. Homer's Athena herself declared Odysseus "far the best of all men in counsel and in speech" (*Odyssey* 13.297–98). See also Maximus of Tyre 21.6, 22.6, 28.2, 40.1, and especially 32.5–9 (Hobein); Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 9.9; Epictetus *Dissertationes* (Arrian) 2.24.26; Strabo *Geography* 1.2.4–5; and Lucian *The Hall* 17 and *The Parasite* 10, where a character likewise calls Odysseus σοφώτατος τῶν ὅλων. Appreciation of Odysseus's oratory also is common among Latin rhetors (e.g., Cicero *Brutus* 40, Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 1.15.3 and 6.14.7, and Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 4.2.13, 11.3.158, and 12.10.64–65).

14. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer,* 38–49, 59–60, 150–55, 222–23, 239, 257–62.

15. This intensification or emulation of Odysseus's sufferings finds an analogy in Ovid's complaints that his exile from Rome was more painful than Odysseus's wanderings from Ithaca. For twenty-eight lines the Latin poet contrasted the more tolerable woes of Homer's hero with his own (*Tristia* 1.5.57–84).

16. Mark 13:34–35a.

17. Mark 6:2.

18. Mark 6:4.

19. *Odyssey* 23.339.

20. *Odyssey* 14.57, 164, and 506, 16.274, 307, and 317, 19.498, 20.167, 21.99, 332, and 427, 22.418, 23.28 and 116, and 24.459.

21. Jesus is not presented as a carpenter in any other gospel, apparently because the other

evangelists were embarrassed by it. Matthew altered Mark to read that Jesus was "the *son* of a carpenter" (13:55); Luke and John say nothing whatever about carpentry. Matthew's reading seems to have influenced the transmission of Mark at an early date, for many manuscripts (including the only surviving papyrus of Mark 6:3) follow Matthew in making Jesus the *son* of a carpenter.

Justin Martyr seems to have known a version of Mark that made Jesus himself a carpenter, but he avoided its potential embarrassment by interpreting it figuratively: Jesus built plows and yokes to symbolize righteousness and an active life (*Dialogue with Trypho* 88). A second-century critic of Christianity named Celsus also knew of the tradition that Jesus was a carpenter, but Origen insisted that "Jesus himself is not described as a carpenter anywhere in the gospels accepted in the churches" (*Contra Celsum* 6.36 [Chadwick]). Origen's text of Mark already may have read "son of a carpenter," a corruption by a scribe, who, like Origen, winced at Jesus' once having labored with a hammer, a plane, and an auger.

22. *Odyssey* 5.234–56 (Fagles 259–83).

23. *Odyssey* 17.339–41; cf. 21.41–50.

24. *Odyssey* 23.178; cf. 189. For other examples of Odysseus's carpentry, see 17.266–68 and 22.126–28, 155–56, and 257–58, and 23.190–201.

25. Dio Chrysostom used Odysseus's carpentry skills to argue that the sage must not be adroit at oratory alone but be skilled also in matters practical. Odysseus demonstrated competence "not merely as a most able speaker" but also as a carpenter, a builder, and a shipwright (*Oratio* 71.3–4).

### *Chapter 3. Foolish Companions*

1. Compare Mark 6:50b–52 with Matt. 14:17–33, Mark 8:21 with Matt. 16:11–12, Mark 8:29 with Matt. 16:15–19, Mark 9:31–32 with Matt. 17:22–23 and Luke 9:44–45, Mark 9:33–34 with Matt. 18:1 and Luke 9:46, and Mark 10:35–37 with Matt. 20:20–21 and Luke 22:24. The Gospel of John, too, presents the disciples more positively.

2. For useful *Forschungsberichte* on the disciples in Mark, see Bertram L. Melbourne, *Slow to Understand: The Disciples in Synoptic Perspective* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 1–22; and C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples according to Mark: Marcan Redaction in Current Debate,* JSNTSup 27 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

3. *Odyssey* 1.4–7 (Fagles 5–9).

4. *Odyssey* 10.132–34, 143, 179, 198–202, 209, 219, 224, 241, 247–48, 265, 408–9, 415, and 566–70, 11.4–5, and 12.12 and 309.

5. Charles Rowan Beye, *Ancient Epic Poetry: Homer, Apollonius, Virgil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 184.

6. *Odyssey* 10.205 and 207. Furthermore, of the search party on Circe's island Eurylochus alone held back, "for he suspected that there was a snare" (10.232).

7. Beye, *Ancient Epic Poetry,* 177.

8. *Odyssey* 12.279–93. Eurylochus was unwilling to risk his life or those of other crewmen to rescue their comrades from Circe's spell (10.266–73; cf. 10.429–48).

9. Mark 8:29–30 and 32–33, 9:5, 10:28, and 14:29–31.

10. Mark 8:31.

11. Compare *Odyssey* 12.277–78 with Mark 8:32.

12. *Odyssey* 12.294–95.
13. Mark 8:33.
14. Mark 14:31.

### *Chapter 4. Sons of Thunder*

1. Mark 1:19 and 29, 3:17, 5:37, 9:2, 10:35 and 41, 13:3, and 14:33.

2. Matt. 27:56. Compare Mark 1:29 with Matt. 8:14, Mark 5:37 with Matt. 9:22, and Mark 13:3 with Matt. 24:3.

3. Luke 9:52–56. Compare Mark 1:29 with Luke 4:38, Mark 10:35 and 41 with Luke 9:22–24, Mark 13:3 with Luke 21:7, and Mark 14:33 with Luke 22:40.

4. Mark 1:16–20.

5. See Mark 3:9, 4:1 and 35–41, 5:21, 6:34 and 45–53, and 8:10–22. Celsus, a second-century opponent of Christianity, faulted Jesus for having chosen as his followers "the most wicked tax-collectors and sailors." Origen properly supposed that Celsus was referring to James and John, "since they left the ship and their father Zebedee and followed Jesus" (*Contra Celsum* 1.26 [Chadwick]). Peter and Andrew, argued Origen, were not sailors but fishermen.

6. *Boanerges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).

7. Eleanor Munro, *On Glory Roads: A Pilgrim's Book about Pilgrimage* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 182. For discussions of Βοανηργές, see Otto Betz, "Donnersöhne, Menschenfischer und der davidische Messias," *Revue de Qumran* 3 (1961): 41–70; Randal Buth, "Mark 3:17: BONERGEM and Popular Etymology," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10 (1981): 29–33; John T. Rook, " 'Boanerges, Sons of Thunder' (Mark 3:17)," *JBL* 100 (1981): 94–95; D. R. G. Beattie, "Boanerges: A Semiticist's Solution," *Irish Biblical Studies* 5 (1983): 11–13; and R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 38–40. Origen understood "Sons of Thunder" to mean the brothers had been sired by "the grandiloquence of the thundering God [τοῦ θεοῦ βροντῶντος], who shouts marvelous things from heaven" (*Commentary on Matthew,* 12.32.56; cf. 12.33.68, *Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 10.1).

8. *Homeric Hymns* 33.1–17.

9. Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4.588–90 and Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 1.568–73 and 4.332–36. See also Lucian *The Ship* 9 and Ps.-Lucian *Charidemus* 3.

10. Mark 9:2–4.

11. Mark 10:35–37.

12. See Mark 12:36, 14:62, and 16:5.

13. See *LIMC,* "Dioskouroi," items 161–64, and "Dioskouroi/Castores," items 14, 27a, 43–46, 49, 52, 86, 93, 142, and 143. Euripides conjured up this same image with Helen seated between the Dioscuri: "For, as Zeus' daughter, deathless must she live, / And shall by Castor and Polydeuces sit / In folds of air, the mariners' saviour she" (*Orestes* 1635–37).

14. Mark 10:38.

15. Mark 14:31.

16. Mark 10:39b–40. Emphasis has been added in this and subsequent quotations.

17. For example, Eduard Schwartz, "Noch einmal der Tod der Söhne Zebedaei," *ZNW* 11 (1910): 89–104.

18. Jean-Daniel Kaestli, "Le rôle des textes bibliques dans la genèse et le développement des légendes apocryphes: Le cas du sort final de l'apôtre Jean," *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 321. On the other hand, a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Greek manuscript of a seventh-century collection of fragments of the fifth-century *Christian History* of Philip of Side, Pamphylia, contains a reference to the second-century writings of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, Phrygia. According to this fragment, "John the Evangelist and his brother James were slain by the Jews" (C. de Boor, *Neue Fragmente des Papias, Hegesippus und Pierius, in bisher unbekannten Excerpten aus der Kirchengeschichte des Philippus Sidetes,* TU 5.2 [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1888], 165–84). For a helpful discussion of John's death, see Culpepper, *John,* 170–74 and 326–27.

19. John 21:20–23.

20. Mark 9:1.

21. Compare the following:

| Mark 9:1 | Mark 13:30 |
|---|---|
| *Truly I tell you* [ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι], there are *some standing here* who *will not* [οὐ μή] *taste death until they see* that the kingdom of God *has come with power* [ἐν δυνάμει]. | *Truly I tell you* [ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι], *this generation will not* [οὐ μή] *pass away until* all these things have taken place. [13:26: "Then *they* will *see* the Son of Man *coming* in the clouds *with* great *power* and glory (μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς)."] |

22. Mark 13:9 and 13.

23. For example, Plato used εἰς τέλος ἔλθειν of runners reaching the finish line (*Republic* 613c and d). Origen interpreted the expression to mean "to the end [ἕως τέλους]" (*Exhortation to Martyrdom* 39.8). See also Eusebius *Commentary on the Psalms;* Psalms *PG* (22.505); and John Chrysostom, *On Matthew PG* (57.393).

24. 4 Ezra 6:25; cf. 4 Ezra 9:7–8: "And it shall be that everyone who will be saved and will be able to escape on account of his works, or on account of the faith by which he has believed, will survive the dangers that have been predicted and will see my salvation."

25. *De petitione matris filiorum Zebedaei, PG* 48.775. Chrysostom argued that the positions of honor sought by the sons of Zebedee were prepared for the most glorious of martyrs. If James and John would win these seats, they must earn them through valorous suffering. See also Jerome's desire to square Mark 10:39–40 with legends about John's surviving attempts on his life (*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, PL* 26.143).

Old Syriac manuscripts of Mark 10:39 solve the perceived disagreement between the text and traditions that John was no martyr by adding the words "you are able." According to Johannes Weiss, the Syriac translator understood his model, without these words, to predict a martyrdom that never took place. The added phrase removed the difficulty by showing that John was capable of martyrdom without actually suffering it ("Zum Märtyretod des Zebedaeiden," *ZNW* 11 [1910]: 167).

26. For a discussion of the complex paternity of the Dioscuri see Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 319, 323.

27. *Nemean Odes* 10.55–56. Cf. *Pythian Odes* 11.61–64; *Odyssey* 11.298–304; *Cypria* frags. 6 and 7; Apollodorus *Library* 3.11.2; Ovid *Fasti* 5.715–20; and Vergil *Aeneid* 6.121–22.

28. For example, Lucian *Dialogues of the Gods* 25.

29. The name "James" precedes "John" consistently in Mark (1:19 and 29, 3:17, 5:37, 9:2, 10:35 and 41, 13:3, and 14:33); indeed, this order is consistent throughout the gospels with only two exceptions (Luke 8:51 and 9:28; cf. Acts 1:13). Early scribes reversed the order of both exceptions to conform to the more common "James and John" (see also variants to Acts 1:13), and scribes apparently never reordered the names in the other direction.

30. Luke 9:51–55.

31. Λαπέρσαι, Strabo *Geography* 8.5.3, citing a lost play by Sophocles (frag. 871 [Nauck]).

32. Herodotus 9.73.2; Isocrates *Oratio* 10 (*Helenae encomium*) 19; Diodorus Siculus 4.63.1–5; Apollodorus *Library* 3.10.7; Plutarch *Theseus* 31–34; Lucian *The Dance* 40; and scholia on *Iliad* 3.242 (stating that the story was told in the *Cypria* [frag. 11] and that the Dioscuri also sacked Athens).

33. A connection of the cult with the Dioscuri was recognized as early as 1771, according to José Cepeda Adán, "Los dioscuros y Santiago en el siglo XVIII. La 'Representación' de Duque de Arcos," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 1 (1964): 647–49. For discussions of the cult of Santiago and Dioscurism, see Américo Castro, *España en su historia: Cristianos, moros y judíos* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1948), 130–44; *Santiago de Espanã* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1958), 81–103; and *The Spaniards: An Introduction to their History*, trans. Willard F. King and Selma Margaretten (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 380–419. Castro's theory has not convinced everyone. See, for example, Baudouin de Gaiffier, "Quelques études sur le probleme de S. Jacques de Compostelle," in "Hispania Lusitania, II," *Analecta Bollandiana* 80 (1962): 395–409, especially 403–5.

34. Castro, *Spaniards*, 399–400. The cult of Santiago was not the first to consider James and Jesus twins. Pseudo-Ignatian correspondence includes the claim that people considered James much "like Jesus Christ in his life and manner of speech, as if he were a brother born from the same womb; they say that if I see him, I see Jesus himself with all the characteristics of his own body" (J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* [London: Macmillan, 1885–1890], 2.2.655).

35. *Odyssey* 11.300; *Homeric Hymn* 33.3. See also Theocritus *Idylls* 22.24.

36. *Homeric Hymns* 17.5 and 33.18.

37. Pindar *Pythian Odes* 1.66; Euripides *Antiope* (LCL, *Select Papyri*, vol. 3); and *Madness of Heracles* 29–30.

38. *Metamorphoses* 8.373–74.

39. *Dialogues of the Gods* 287.

40. See *LIMC*, "Dioskouroi," items 2–14, 24–49, 113, 123a, 139, 147, 165, 180, 181, 183; and "Dioskouroi/Castores," items 32, 40, 41, 51, 57, 68a, 70a, 77, 88, 92, 103–12, and 115. Pausanius mentioned an altar to the Dioscuri in the hippodrome at Elis (*Description of Greece* 5.15.5).

41. *De natura deorum* 2.2; cf. *De divinatione* 1.34.75 and 2.32.68.

42. *De natura deorum* 3.5.

43. *De natura deorum* 2.2.

44. *De natura deorum* 2.2 and 3.5. The grateful victors set up altars to the Heavenly Twins on the banks of the river (Strabo *Geography* 6.261).

45. Castro, *Spaniards,* 387.

46. *Vida de San Millán,* 437–39; Castro, *Spaniards,* 388.

47. Munro, *Glory Roads,* 190. The most recent appearance was recorded among Native Americans in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, who claimed to have seen Santiago on a white horse riding out of a storm cloud (Luther Bean, "The Miracle at San Acacio," *San Luis Valley Historian* 4 [1972]: 2).

### *Chapter 5. Murderous Usurpers*

1. Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Religious Authorities in the Gospel of Mark," *NTStud* 36 (1990): 63. See also Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization," *JBL* 108 (1989): 270–75.

2. Kingsbury, "Religious Authorities," 63.

3. *Odyssey* 4.669–73.

4. *Odyssey* 4.843 (Fagles 948) and 5.18–19 (Fagles 20–21); cf. 4.770–86, 13.426, 15.30, 16.364–92, 17.66 and 596, and 20.241–42.

5. Mark 1:11.

6. For instance, "the scribes who came down from Jerusalem" (3:22) and "the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem" (7:1).

7. Mark 11:18, 12:12–13, and 14:1.

8. Mark 11:15–18.

9. *Odyssey* 22.15–25 (Fagles 15–25).

10. *Odyssey* 22.84–86; cf. 438 and 452–53.

11. *LIMC,* "Mnesteres II," 635 (Odette Touchefeu-Meynier). See images 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, and 20–23; cf. 4 and 5.

12. One might also compare Mark 11:17 with *Odyssey* 4.315 and 318–21: "Then wise Telemachus answered him: . . . 'My home [μοι οἶκος] is being devoured and my rich lands are ruined; my house [δόμος] is filled with men that are foes, who continue to slay my thronging sheep and my spiral-horned cattle of shambling gait,—the suitors, these, of my mother, overweening in their insolence.' "

Here and throughout, emphasis has been added to aid comparison.

13. Mark speaks of the dishonoring of the servants by using ἠτίμασαν, "they dishonored," the same word used by Homer of the insolence of Odysseus's servants in *Odyssey* 16.307 and 317, 19.498, and 22.418.

14. Telemachus is called "beloved [ἀγαπητός]" in *Odyssey* 2.365, 4.727 and 817, and 5.18–19: "And now again they are minded to slay his well-loved son [παῖδ' ἀγαπητόν] on his homeward way."

15. Jesus' conclusion to this parable has many parallels in the epic, like this one spoken by Odysseus himself.

| *Odyssey* 14.163–64 | Mark 12:9 |
| --- | --- |
| He [Odysseus] shall return, and take vengeance on all those who here dishonor his wife and his glorious son. | What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants [who had slain the beloved son] and give the vineyard to others. |

Compare *Odyssey* 17.539–40: "But if Odysseus should come and return to his native land, at once would he with his son take vengeance on these men for their violent deeds."

16. *Odyssey* 16.371–72 and 383–85; cf. 17.79–80.

17. Heubeck, *Commentary*, 1.151.

18. Mark 12:7–8.

19. See Harry T. Fleddermann, *Mark and Q: A Study of the Overlap Texts*, BETL 112 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 186–89.

20. *Odyssey* 1.145 suggests a hierarchy of seating arrangements among the suitors (Heubeck, *Commentary*, 1.95); cf. 1.145, 17.179, and 20.249.

21. *Odyssey* 1.250–51, 2.48–49, 64, and 235–38, 4.318, 16.127–28, 19.133, 21.332–33, and 22.36. The following texts are particularly relevant. Mentor: "[T]hey violently devour [κατέδουσι] the house [οἶκον] of Odysseus, who, they say, will no more return" (*Odyssey* 2.237–38). Nestor: "[T]hey divide and devour [κατὰ . . . φάγωσιν] all your wealth" (*Odyssey* 3.315–16 [= 15.12–13]). Telemachus: "My home is being devoured [ἐσθίεταί μοι οἶκος] and my rich lands are ruined" (*Odyssey* 4.318).

22. For example, Maximus of Tyre 32.9d.

23. Nineteen times Homer uses the word βίοτον, "livelihood," which nearly always appears in connection with the suitors' devouring of the livelihood of Penelope and Telemachus.

24. Luke 20:45–21:4.

25. *Odyssey* 17.256–60. Homer also emphasized Melanthius's greed by having him threaten to sell Eumaeus, "that he may bring me in much wealth" (17.256–60).

26. Mark 14:11.

27. Mark 14:18–21. Compare Jesus' final statement here with *Odyssey* 18.79, spoken by the suitor Antinous to the beggar Irus: "[I]t would be better you did not exist, nor had ever been born."

28. *Odyssey* 17.370–73.

29. Judas's betrayal also is ironic, insofar as he identifies Jesus with a kiss and the address "Rabbi."

30. *Odyssey* 22.142–46; cf. 161–93.

31. Mark 14:43.

32. *Odyssey* 22.474–77.

33. See Matt. 27:3–5; Acts 1:18; and a fragment from Papias of Hierapolis from a commentary on Matthew by Apollinaris of Laodicea. For the most recent edition, see Josef Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments*, Eichstätter Materialien 4 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1983), 104–5, frag. 5.

Mark may have applied Melanthius's punishment to another character related to Judas. Compare the following:

| *Odyssey* 22.474–76 | Mark 14:46–47 |
| --- | --- |
| Then out they led Melanthius through the doorway and the court,<br>and *cut off* his nostrils and<br>*his ears* [οὔατα] with *the pitiless bronze*, | Then they laid hands on him [Jesus] and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his *sword* and struck the slave of the high priest,<br>*cutting off his ear* [ὠτάριον]. |

Mark's word ὠτάριον is a diminutive of Homer's word for ear, οὖς.

34. Mark 11:18 and 27–33 and 12:1–12.

35. Both turncoats have potentially ominous names: Melanthius means "black one"; the name Judas is identical with Judah, and, by association, Jew. Homer's selection of the name Melanthius surely was significant, as was his naming of his sister, Melantho. Mark may have selected Judas to be the traitor to symbolize the rejection of Jesus by Jews.

36. *Odyssey* 18.2–3 and 6–7.

37. *Odyssey* 18.11–12.

38. *Odyssey* 18.112–13.

39. *Odyssey* 18.122–23. The ironies of this scene are admirably treated by Sheila Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 84–85. See also Daniel B. Levine, "*Odyssey* 18: Iros as Paradigm for the Suitors," *Classical Journal* 77 (1982): 200–204.

40. Mark 15:6.

41. Mark 15:2, 9, and 12. Mark's Jesus had called God Abba in 14:36.

42. Matt. 27:16.

43. Odysseus, too, had a purple cloak. Homer's hero wanted to prove to Penelope that he, the beggar, knew her husband, and to do so described his attire: "A fleecy cloak of purple [πορφορέην] did noble Odysseus wear, a cloak of double fold" (*Odyssey* 19.225–26; cf. 241–42: "I, too, gave him . . . a beautiful purple cloak [πορφυρέην]"). Of course, many royal characters wore purple, but both in Homer and in Mark the garment is dyed with irony. Odysseus and Penelope remember the hero in a magnificent purple robe, but now he appears as a miserable beggar. Jesus, on the way to his death, is mockingly dressed in a purple robe by the very soldiers who will execute him.

44. Holzberg, "*Historia*," 98.

45. *Antiquities* 6.362–63; see Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος," 21–22.

46. Not only did the authors of Matthew, Luke, and John fail to understand the function of these markers, as often as not they stripped them out of their own narratives. For example, Matthew's Jesus is not a carpenter but the son of a carpenter; Luke and John say nothing whatever about carpentry. No other gospel refers to James and John as Sons of Thunder. Luke and John are silent about the request of James and John for places of honor on Jesus' right and left, while Matthew has their mother make the request on their behalf. Only Luke retains Mark's contrast between the generous widow and Jesus' rivals. Luke's Jesus expels the merchants in the temple with a word, without overturning tables, chairs, and vessels. John says nothing about Jesus' house becoming a den of thieves.

### *Chapter 6. Recognitions*

1. The best treatment to date of secrecy and recognition in the epic is that of Murnaghan, *Disguise*. The recognition scenes in the *Odyssey* may account for the presence of the motif in many Greek tragedies. Holzberg argues convincingly for imitations of Odysseus's recognitions in the *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre* ("*Historia*," 98).

2. *Odyssey* 17.484–87.

3. This theology is expressed in the story of Philemon and Baucis, a poor, elderly couple who showed hospitality to Zeus and Hermes (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.618–724). The

themes of disguise, testing, and judgment also figure prominently in Euripides' *Bacchae;* cf. Acts 14:8–20 and Pausanius 2.35.4.

4. See *Odyssey* 1.105, 2.268, 6.22, 10.278, 13.222, 16.157–58, and 20.31.

5. *Odyssey* 13.287–310 and 397–403; cf. 13.190–93. Earlier in the epic, too, Odysseus kept his identity a secret when in a hostile environment (4.244–56 and 7.14–45).

6. In each of these situations, Homer used the cognate verbs πειρᾶν and πειρητίζειν, both meaning "to test." For the testing of Penelope see *Odyssey* 13.333–38; of the servants see 15.304–6, 16.305–7, 313, and 319; and of Laertes 24.214–21 and 235–40.

7. On Odysseus's disguise as an imitation of divine disguises see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales,* Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 175; Murnaghan, *Disguise,* 11–13, 20, 53, 59, and 67–68; and especially Emily Kearns, "The Return of Odysseus: A Homeric Theoxeny," *Classical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 2–8.

8. Bernard Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey,* Hermes Einzelschriften 30 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 46. See 5–60, where Fenik supplies a thorough assessment of disguise, testing, recognition, and irony in the epic. See also Beye, *Ancient Epic Poetry,* 168–70.

9. *Odyssey* 19.215–16.

10. *Odyssey* 19.250.

11. *Odyssey* 23.202–6.

12. *Odyssey* 24.329–46.

13. Mark 1:1 and 11.

14. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 60.

15. Mark 9:9–10.

16. Mark 8:27–30.

17. *Odyssey* 19.474–75 (Fagles 536–38).

18. *Odyssey* 19.482, 485–86 (Fagles 545 and 548–50), and 494. See the discussion of Eurycleia and Homeric recognition scenes generally in N. J. Richardson, "Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey* and Ancient Literary Criticism," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983): 219–35.

19. Mark 9:9.

20. Mark 5:19.

21. Mark 7:36.

22. Mark 1:24–25.

23. This recognition is in keeping with the Homeric theological dictum that gods cannot disguise themselves from other gods: "[F]or not unknown are the immortal gods to one another, even though one dwells in a home far away" (*Odyssey* 5.79–80). Homer's deities are adroit, however, at disguising themselves from mortals (see 1.104–5, 2.382–85, 7.19–20, and 8.193–94). "Who with his eyes could behold a god against his will?" (10.573–74); cf. 1.311–13.

24. Mark 1:34.

25. Mark 3:11–12.

26. Mark 8:26.

27. Mark 5:43a.

28. Mark 1:43–44.

29. Mark 1:45.

30. Mark 2:1–12, 3:1–6, and 9:14–29. It is not certain that the scribes themselves witnessed the exorcism in Mark 9; see verse 25, where Jesus seems to speed up the exorcism to avoid detection.

31. This interpretation of Mark 8:11–12 may explain Mark's omission of the reference to Jonah in the version of the saying about signs known to Q. Compare the following:

| Q/Luke 11:29–30 | Mark 8:11–12 |
| --- | --- |
| When the crowds were increasing, | The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking for a sign from heaven, to test him. And *he* sighed deeply in his spirit and *said,* |
| *he began to say,* | "Why does *this generation* |
| "*This generation* is an evil *generation;* | *ask for a sign*? Truly I tell you, |
| it *asks for a sign,* | *no sign will be given to this generation.*" |
| but *no sign will be given to it* | |
| except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation." | |

In Q, Jesus speaks to the crowds, not to his opponents as in Mark. More important, in Q Jesus does indeed give them a sign—not a miracle, but the example of Jonah, who preached repentance to Gentiles. In Mark's version, Jesus gives his interlocutors no sign whatsoever; any sign to his enemies would be dangerous. On these parallels see Fleddermann, *Mark and Q*, 126–34.

Parallels with Q also illumine this hypothesis in connection with the Beelzebul controversy. In Q 11.20 Jesus claims, "[I]f it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." This statement is missing in Mark, presumably because had Jesus made it to the religious authorities, he would have raised further suspicions concerning his identity: in him God's rule has arrived.

32. Mark 6:14–16; cf. 8:28.

33. Mark 11:28–32.

34. Mark 2:9.

35. Mark 14:56.

36. Mark 14:60–62. Three times in the *Odyssey* one finds this formula after Odysseus or Telemachus had been insulted: "[B]ut he shook his head in silence, pondering evil in the deep of his heart" (*Odyssey* 17.465 and 491 [of Telemachus], and 20.184). See also 20.300–302.

37. *Odyssey* 16.205–6.

38. *Odyssey* 19.483–84.

39. *Odyssey* 21.207–8.

40. *Odyssey* 22.35–36.

41. *Odyssey* 24.321–22. See also 9.19 and 16.187–88.

42. *Odyssey* 22.42–43.

43. Mark 14:63–64.

44. Mark 14:61–62 has been considered the disclosure of the messianic secret also by

John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark,* SBLDS 10 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1973); Norman Perrin, "The High Priest's Question and Jesus' Answer (Mark 14:61–62)," in *The Passion in Mark: Studies in Mark 14–16,* ed. Werner H. Kelber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 81–82; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 84; and Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 263 and 281.

### *Chapter 7. Sleeping Sailors*

1. As in Mark 6:47–52, Jesus walks on water in John 6:14–21, which many scholars suppose to be a version of the story independent of Mark, but it is more likely that the Fourth Evangelist simply rewrote Mark's tale. The best evidence for some literary connection is the immediate juxtaposition both in Mark and John of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:32–44 and John 6:1–15) and the walking on water (Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:16–21). John's account also shares many verbal similarities with Mark. Notice also the parallels between the pericopes that follow in both gospels, both of which narrate the reactions of the crowds on shore after Jesus disembarked (Mark 6:53–56 and John 6:22–25). Furthermore, both Mark and John later contain discourses on food: Mark 7:1–23, the controversy about eating with defiled hands; John 6:26–59, the bread of life discourse. See Robert M. Fowler, "The Feeding of the Five Thousand: A Markan Composition," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers,* ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 1.101–4; and J. Konings, "The Pre-Markan Sequence in Jn., VI: A Critical Re-examination," in *L'évangile selon Marc: Tradition et rédaction,* ed. M. Sabbe, BETL 34 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 147–77.

Luke 5:1–11 and John 21:1–11 narrate the miraculous catch of fish that many interpreters claim was traditional and independent of Mark. (The *Gospel of Peter* once contained a postresurrection fishing story, but the surviving fragment of it suggests that it merely recast the tale in John 21.) Careful comparisons of the miraculous catches in Luke 5 and John 21 strongly suggest that the latter used the former as a source (e.g., Frans Neirynck, *Jean et les synoptiques. Examen critique de l'exégèse de M.-É Boismard,* BETL 49 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979], 140–44). This leaves only Luke 5:1–11 as possible independent evidence of apostolic anglers, but it may well be nothing more than an expansion of the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John in Mark. Luke 5:1–3 and 10–11 display unmistakable reliance on Mark 1:16–20 and 4:1–2, so the only passage potentially independent of Mark is 5:4–9. But these verses, too, ultimately may be dependent on Mark, if one views them as Luke's redactional solution to a problem inherent in Mark's account of the calling of the fishermen. Why would these four disciples have left their families and livelihoods simply because Jesus told them they could fish for people? Luke's miraculous catch of fish provides the motivation: they saw Jesus' power and recognized him to be a divine agent worthy of worship. As Peter put it, " 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at that catch of fish that they had taken" (Luke 5:8–9).

2. After analyzing the relevant nautical texts in Mark, Robert M. Fowler concluded, "It is our thesis that all the instances of the boat motif in Mark were created by the evangelist himself" (*Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark,* SBLDS 54 [Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981], 62).

The most thorough examination of Mark's geography is that of Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, whose interests are almost exclusively literary and structuralist (*Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, New Voices in Biblical Studies [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986]). See also her articles on the subject, "Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Marcan Interpretation," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 242–55; and "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," *JBL* 103 (1984): 363–77.

3. *Odyssey* 2.291–95.

4. Homer, too, spoke of anglers for *anthropoi* in his people-like-fish similes. The Laestrygonian cannibals crushed most of Odysseus's ships, sent his crew into the sea, and "spearing them like fishes they carried them home for their loathsome meal" (10.124). The second simile concerns Scylla's devouring Odysseus's comrades: "And as a fisherman on a jutting rock, when he casts his bait as a snare to the little fishes, with his long pole lets down into the sea the horn of a field-dwelling ox, and then as he catches a fish flings it writhing ashore, even so were they drawn writhing up toward the cliffs" (12.251–55). The final simile concerns the dead suitors, whom Odysseus surveyed after destroying them: "[H]e found them one and all fallen in the blood and dust—all the host of them, like fishes that fishermen have drawn forth in the meshes of their net from the gray sea upon the curving beach, and they all lie heaped upon the sand . . . , even so now the suitors lay heaped upon each other" (22.382–87 and 399; cf. *Iliad* 16.406–9). Fishing for people was a widespread trope in the ancient world and usually had such violent associations; see Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 64–133.

5. This passage from the *Odyssey* also seems to have influenced *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 4–6, in which Jesus supplied Andrew with a ship. See *Christianizing Homer*, 41–42.

6. Luke 5:8–11.

7. Mark 3:9; cf. 4:1 (and 35), 6:32 and 45, and 8:10 and 13. If Mark did have *Odyssey* 2 before him, it might explain the awkward expression "James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John," instead of the more economical and common "James and John, the sons of Zebedee" (as in Mark 10:35 and Luke 5:10; see also Mark's Greek in 1:16). Homer had written of "Noemon, the glorious son of Phronius."

8. The Septuagint, translating the Hebrew word ים, refers to the Chinnereth as a θάλασσα, but not in conjunction with the word Galilee.

9. Gerd Theissen discusses the nomenclature for Palestinian bodies of water in Josephus and other Jewish authors in "'Meer' und 'See' in den Evangelien. Ein Beitrag zur Lokalkoloritforschung," *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 10 (1985): 11–12.

10. The Fourth Evangelist apparently thought it necessary to tell his readers that this "Sea of Galilee" was the same as "the Sea of Tiberias" (6:1; cf. 21:1).

11. *Apud* Marcarius Magnes *Apocriticus* 3.6 (= Porphyry *Contra christianos* frag. 55; translation mine). Jerome, too, knew of Porphyry's objection and countered it by noting that in Hebrew any body of water might be called a *mare* (= ים; *Haebr. Quaest. in Gen.*, on Gen. 1:10). Cf. Theophylact *Enarratio in evangelium Joannis* (*PG* 123.1284).

12. Porphyry uses πέλαγος for "sea" instead of θάλασσα and deprives both nouns of articles, just as in epic (κάκ βυθοῦ καὶ πελάγους).

13. Mark 4:1.

14. Mark 4:35–42.

15. For example, Ps. 65:7, 77:16, 89:9, and especially 107:23–32.

16. Like Jesus, Jonah boards a boat and a wind stirs up the sea, endangering the ship and crew (1:3–4). Mark's word for "boat" throughout the story is πλοῖον; the same word is used in Jonah. The sailor feared and prayed to their gods, while Jonah went to the hold of the ship and slept (1:5 [ἐκάθευδεν]; cf. Mark 4:38 [καθεύδων]). His nap became known to the captain, who told him to get up and ask his god, too, to come to the rescue "that we not perish" (1:6 [μὴ ἀπολώμεθα]; cf. 1:14 and Mark 4:38 [ἀπολλύμεθα]). After lots determined that the prophet was the root of the problem, he admitted his guilt (1:7–9). The sailors, still fearful, asked what they should do with him to get the sea to abate (1:10–11 [κοπάσει ἡ θάλασσα]; cf. Mark 4:39 [ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος]), and he told them to throw him overboard and the sea would indeed abate (1:12 [κοπάσει ἡ θάλασσα]). They did so, the storm stopped, and as a result "the men feared the Lord greatly" (1:16 [ἐφοβήθησαν . . . φόβον μέγαν]; cf. Mark 4:41 [ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν]). Q 11:32 (= Matt. 12:41 and Luke 11:32) likewise relates Jesus to Jonah: "something greater than Jonah is here."

17. Scholars have interpreted the reference to these ships as an accurate historical reminiscence, an indication of Jesus' popularity, an escalation of the danger of the storm, an increase in the number of witnesses to the miracle, evidence that the original story did not pertain to the disciples but to a wider circle of followers, or a trace of a traditional tale that enhanced the danger of the voyage by insisting that "other boats were *not* with him"; for some reason Mark omitted the word "not" (Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus,* 14th ed., Kritische-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testaments 1.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959], 90). One of the most intriguing proposals suggests that in the original story Jesus and the Twelve could not all fit in one typical fishing boat and therefore needed several of them. Later, Mark (or his tradition) interpreted the story in light of Jonah, which featured a single large vessel. The reference to "other boats," thus, is an unredacted trace of tradition (Reinhard Kratz, *Rettungswunder. Motiv-, traditions- und formkritische Aufarbeitung einer biblischen Gattung,* Europäische Hochschulschriften 23.123 [Frankfurt am Mann: Peter Lang, 1979], 204–7).

18. Because Odysseus's voyages sometimes lasted for weeks, he had no choice but to sleep onboard, and Homer has him do so often. For example, he slept through his entire last voyage back to Ithaca at the ship's stern on a rug and linen sheet, not in the hold, as Jonah did.

| *Odyssey* 13.73–80 | Mark 4:38 |
|---|---|
| Then for Odysseus they [the Phaeacian sailors] spread a rug, and a linen sheet on the deck of the hollow ship | |
| *at the stern* [πρυμνῆς], | But he was *in the stern* [πρύμνῃ], |
| that he might *sleep* [εὕδοι] soundly; | *asleep* [καθεύδων] on the cushion. |
| *and he too went aboard* | [Cf. 4:1: *[H]e got into a boat* |
| [ἂν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐβήσετο], | (ὥστε αὐτὸν . . . ἐμβάντα) |
| and laid himself down in silence. | and *sat* there (καθῆσθαι).] |
| Then they *sat down* [καθίζον]. . . . | |
| *[S]weet sleep fell upon his eyelids,* | |
| an unawakening sleep, most sweet, | |
| and most like to death. | |

Just as Jesus slept at the stern (πρύμνῃ) on a cushion so soundly that even a storm did not awaken him, Odysseus had slept at the stern (πρυμνῆς) on a rug and a linen sheet so soundly that he never awoke until the sailors placed him on the Ithacan shore. In the New Testament the word πρύμνα appears only here and twice in Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27:29 and 41; it never appears in the Septuagint.

19. Job 27:20 and Wisd. 5:23.

20. *Odyssey* 9.68, 12.314, 400, 408, and 428, and 24.42.

21. *Odyssey* 5.391; cf. 382–84 and 452, 7.319, and 10.94.

22. *Odyssey* 12.167–68.

23. Mark might have lifted the motif of fearful sailors awaking the sleeping hero from Jonah, where the crew was terrified by the storm and woke the prophet in order to have him pray to his god lest they perish (μὴ ἀπολώμεθα; Jonah 1:6).

24. *Odyssey* 10.21–22 (Fagles 24–25).

25. For example, Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 1.15.73.

26. Lucian *Dance* 46.

27. Epictetus *Discourse* 1.16; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4.764–65; Vergil *Aeneid* 1.65–66 and 80; Diodorus Siculus 5.7.7; Strabo 6.2.10; Lucian *Dance* 46; Apollodorus *Epitome* 7.10; and Polybius 34.11.20.

28. *True Story* 1.40–42. On floating islands see also Herodotus 2.156 and Apollonius *Argonautica* 2.285 and 297.

29. *Aeneid* 1.140–43.

### *Chapter 8. Spelunc ular Savages*

1. For formal discussions of exorcisms see John F. Craghan, "The Gerasene Demoniac," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 524–25; Rudolf Pesch, "The Markan Version of the Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac," *Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971): 354; and *Der Besessene von Gerasa. Entstehung und Überlieferung einer Wundergeschichte,* Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 56 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972), 21–40; and Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition,* trans. Francis McDonagh, ed. John Riches (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 43–80 and 85–90.

2. Craghan, "Demoniac," 524.

3. For a breakdown of scholarly positions as of 1968, see Craghan, "Demoniac," 522–24. His assessment is still appropriate: "Quot capita, tot sententiae" (524). On the novelistic elements, see also K. Gatzweiler, "La guérison du démoniaque gérasénien," *Foi et la temps* 2 (1972): 460–76.

4. Especially relevant to Mark is Isa. 65:3–4: "This people constantly provokes me: they sacrifice in their gardens and burn incense on bricks to demons [δαιμονίοις] who do not exist; to receive dreams, they sleep in the tombs [μνήμασιν] and in the caves; they eat the flesh of swine and the broth of sacrifices." The references to demons, swine, and sleeping in caves are indeed impressive, and other possible verbal affinities to Mark appear: Isa. 65: 7: ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων (cf. Mark 5:5: ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν); 9: κατοικήσουσιν (cf. Mark 5:3: κατοίκησιν); and 11: δαίμονι (cf. Mark 5:15–18).

5. Matt. 8:29.

6. *Odyssey* 10.343–47; cf. 381.

7. *Argonautica* 4.557–752.

8. *Aeneid* 7.5–24.

9. *Metamorphoses* 14.

10. *Satyricon* 127–34.

11. Lucian *True Story* 2.46 and Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 1.7–13.

12. *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 1–2 and 18–21. See *Christianizing Homer,* 38–40, 47–49, and 59–62. Clement of Alexandria compared so-called heretics with Circe insofar as their magic turned their hearers into swine (*Stromateis* 7.95.1). For similar invectives see Origen *Contra Celsum* 5.63–64 and Horace *Epistles* 1.2.23–26. On Circe as a topos see Kaiser, "Odyssee-Szenen," 197–213.

13. Gantz, *Myth,* 708; and Heubeck, *Commentary,* 2.20.

14. Howard Jacobson, "Cacus and the Cyclops," *Mnemosyne* 42 (1989): 101–2; and J. M. Glenn, "Mezentius and Polyphemus," *American Journal of Philology* 92 (1971): 129–55.

15. Virginia Knight, *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius,* Mnemosyne, Supplementum 152 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 127–44.

16. Stavros A. Frangoulidis, "A Pattern from Homer's *Odyssey* in the Sicilian Narrative of Thucydides," *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica* 44 (1993): 95–102; and "Homeric Allusions to the Cyclopeia in Apuleius' Description of the Robbers' Cave," *La Parola del Passato* 47 (1992): 50–58. Polyphemus also figured significantly in Cratinus's lost comedy *Odysseus.*

17. Philoxenus of Cythera wrote a comedy entitled *Cyclops, or Galatea.* See also Theocritus 11; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13.749–897; and Lucian *Dialogues of the Sea-Gods* 2.

18. For example, Petronius *Satyricon* 97 and Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 8.11–13.

19. *Odyssey* 9.106–29.

20. *Odyssey* 9.214–15 and 241 (Fagles 273–74).

21. *Odyssey* 9.288–94 (Fagles 324–30).

22. *Odyssey* 9.187–89.

23. Mark 5:3b–5. The Greek word translated here "subdued" is δαμάσαι, from δαμάζω. The word appears only here in the gospels, only twice elsewhere in the New Testament, and only once in the Septuagint, but its cognate δαμνύω is Homeric commonplace. The poet uses it twice in the Polyphemus story about Odysseus subduing the giant (*Odyssey* 9.454 and 516; see also πανδαμάτωρ, "subduer of all," in line 373).

24. It may be relevant to note that the name Polyphemus likewise suggests a plurality: "many voiced," or "much spoken of" (Πολύφημος).

25. *Odyssey* 9.118–19, 121, and 123–24.

26. The verb used in both stories for feeding, βόσκω, was common in Greek from Homer on, so its appearance in both contexts is not particularly noteworthy. On the other hand, in the Synoptic Gospels βόσκω appears only once outside the three versions of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 15:15; but see John 21:15 and 17).

27. Matthew and Luke, apparently leery of the hyperbolic herd, refused to count them (Matt. 8:32 and Luke 8:33).

28. *Apud* Macarius Magnes *Apocriticus* 3.4.

29. Matt. 8:34. Luke partially avoids the redundancy by limiting the second report exclusively to "how the one who had been possessed by the demons had been healed," avoiding any repetition of what had happened to the swine (8:36).

30. Commentators on the *Odyssey* have noted that Homer needed to involve the other

Cyclopes in the story in order to incorporate the wordplay on Nobody. Without Polyphemus's neighbors there would be no one to misinterpret the pun (Heubeck, *Commentary*, 2.20).

31. *Odyssey* 9.105–39. On Polyphemus's nudity in art see Odette Touchefeu-Meynier, *Thèmes odysséens dans l'art antique* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968), 10–79 and related plates.

32. Compare the following:

| *Odyssey* 9.506 and 517–18 | Mark 5:18b–19a |
|---|---|
| [A]nd he groaned and said in answer: . . . "[C]ome hither, Odysseus, *that I may set before you gifts of entertainment.*" [Odysseus refused the offer.] | [T]he man who had been possessed by demons begged *him that he might be with him.* But Jesus refused. |

33. Mark 15:46.

34. Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 198 (no. 228) and 202 (no. 235).

35. Pausanius *Description of Greece* 8.16.5.

36. Mark 16:4.

37. *Odyssey* 9.240–43 and 305, 313, and 340.

38. Matt. 27:60 (cf. *Gospel of Peter* 8:32), Luke 24:2, and John 20:1.

39. *Odyssey* 9.304–5.

### *Chapter 9. Femmes Fatales*

1. Mark 6:20.

2. Mark 6:21–29.

3. Josephus rightly referred to Herod Antipas as a tetrarch, but the evangelist repeatedly called him a "king." Matthew and Luke took issue with Mark's granting Herod a promotion and demoted him back to a tetrarch (Matt. 14:1 [but see verse 9] and Luke 9:7). Herodias's former husband was not named Philip but Herod, like her second husband (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.109–110). Mark seems to have confused Herodias's son-in-law, named Philip, with her former husband. Josephus also says nothing of Herodias's antagonism for John or Herod's admiration of him. Herod's stepdaughter from his marriage to Herodias was named Salome (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.136). I accept the textual variant αὐτῆς τῆς in verse 22 as defended by James K. Elliott, *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark: An Edition of C. H. Turner's "Notes on Marcan Usage" together with Other Comparable Studies,* Novum Testamentum Supplements 71 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 197. The variant αὐτοῦ would name both women Herodias, yet another variation from Josephus. Gerd Theissen carefully compares the accounts of Josephus and Mark in *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition,* trans. L. M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 81–97.

4. *Antiquities* 18.118.

5. See especially Roger Aus, *Water into Wine and the Beheading of John the Baptist: Early Jewish-Christian Interpretation of Esther 1 in John 2:1–11 and Mark 6:17–29,* Brown Judaic Studies 150 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

6. For example, Herodotus 9.108–13; Diogenes Laertius 9.10.58 (Anaxarchus); Livy 39.42–43; and Seneca the Elder *Controversiae* 9.2. For a discussion of this tradition see Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 91–95.

7. *Odyssey* 3.254–308, 4.512–47, and 11.404–34.

8. *Odyssey* 4.534–37.

9. *Odyssey* 11.409–11, 416–20, and 426–30 (Fagles 462–5, 471–75, and 483–86).

10. *Odyssey* 11.419 (Fagles 474); cf. 4.535 and 11.411; δειπνίσσας, and Mark 6:21: δεῖπνον.

11. Mark 6:28.

12. Agamemnon had left behind two daughters as well, Iphigenia and Electra.

13. *Odyssey* 11.454–56.

14. For an excellent treatment of Homer's use of the murder of Agamemnon to contrast with the Slaying of the Suitors, see Laura M. Slatkin, "Composition by Theme and the *Metis* of the *Odyssey*," in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays*, ed. Seth L. Schein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 227–28.

15. Mark 6:29 and 15:45–46.

16. For example, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1372–87; Horace *Satires* 1.1.100; and Hyginus *Fabulae* 117: "They killed him with an axe as he was sacrificing."

17. *Electra* 193–99.

18. *Odyssey* 4.535 and 11.411. See *LIMC*, "Klytaimnestra," item 20.

19. Euripides *The Daughters of Troy* 361–62.

20. *Agamemnon* 897–903.

21. *LIMC*, "Agamemnon," items 89 and 96–99.

22. *Imagines* 2.10.1–4.

23. *LIMC*, "Klytaimnestra," items 15–20.

### *Chapter 10. Feasts for Thousands*

1. Fowler provides an excellent summary and critique of the source proposals of Luke H. Jenkins, Vincent Taylor, Leander Keck, Rudolf Pesch, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, and Paul J. Achtemeier (*Loaves and Fishes*, 7–31).

2. Mark 8:19–21. The disciples again resemble Odysseus's crew, whose folly frequently pertained to food.

3. 2 Kings 4:42–44 (LXX).

4. Mark 6:31.

5. Mark 6:34; cf. Num. 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:6; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34.5; Zech. 10:12; Judith 11:19; and 2 Baruch 77:16.

6. For an extensive treatment of similarities between the two feasts, see Wm. F. Hansen, *The Conference Sequence: Patterned Narration and Narrative Inconsistency in the Odyssey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 34–47.

7. *Odyssey* 3.34–70.

8. *Odyssey* 4.1–70.

9. Mark bracketed the feeding of the five thousand between two voyages, to and from the "deserted place" where the feeding took place. Both voyages and disembarkations are similar to Telemachus's voyage to Pylos. Compare *Odyssey* 2.414–21 and 434 and 3.4, 11–12, and 34–35 with Mark 6:32–34, 51, and 53–55.

10. *Odyssey* 3.31.

11. Matt. 14:21.

12. *Odyssey* 3.7–8.

13. Mark 6:39–40.

14. "[S]et such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens." These numbers play a curious role in the Dead Sea Scrolls (CD xiii.1, 1QS ii,21, 1QSa i,14–15, and 1QM iv.1–5).

15. *Odyssey* 4.27–29.

16. Mark 8:3–4. Mark's reader should be astonished at this question from the disciples, for the Twelve themselves had distributed the loaves and fish to the five thousand.

17. If Mark were dependent on Book 4 of the *Odyssey*, one might be able to account for a notorious awkwardness in the feeding of the four thousand. Mark does not mention fish before verse 7. One would expect a reference to fish in verse 5, along with the bread, which would parallel the reference to bread and fish in the feeding of the five thousand (6:38). The apparent intrusion of fish into the story in 8:7 has led to speculations of a tension between a source and Mark's incorporation of it (Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 53–54), but the parallel with the epic suggests a simpler explanation. The servants of Menelaus offer the guests food in two courses: bread first and then meat. The evangelist, imitating the feast, likewise has Jesus present bread first and then fish, apparently without recognizing he had not earlier mentioned the fish.

Furthermore, the proposed biblical and eucharistic antecedents cannot easily explain these fish. There were no fish in the wilderness, no fish in the story of Elisha, and no fish in the Eucharist before Mark. Even though these fish are not as important for Mark as the bread, they seem to be sufficiently important to mention in both stories. Scholars who see in the feeding stories an allusion to an eschatological banquet cite texts in which the guests will eat animal flesh as well as bread. The fish, then, symbolize the meat at the messianic meal (U. H. J. Körtner, "Das Fischmotiv im Speisungswunder," *ZNW* 75 [1984]: 24–35).

The parallels with the *Odyssey* suggest a simpler solution to Mark's fish: Mark wanted to supplement the bread with some kind of meat to make the multiplication of bread into a more substantial feast. But why fish instead of the beef of Nestor and Menelaus? Mark may have wanted to contrast the extravagance of Homer's heroes with the frugality of Jesus, but a more convincing answer may emerge from details native to Mark's setting. Jesus and his disciples had sailed to the shore where the first feeding took place, so when he told them to "go and see" how much bread they had, they must have gone back to the boat to check on their supplies. Insofar as ancient vessels were ill-equipped for cooking, sailors provisioned them with dried food that would not spoil. Bread and dried fish were apt supplies for sailing, especially for fishermen.

18. Compare *Odyssey* 4.1–68 with Tobit 7:1–14.

19. *Aeneid* 8.81–189. See Georg Nicolaus Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer*, 2d ed., Hypomnemata 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 249–52; and *Acts of Andrew* GE 5 (*Christianizing Homer*, 119–20). Homer's Menelaus is twice recast in the *Acts of Andrew* (GE 16 and 28; see *Christianizing Homer*, 132–33 and 188–90).

20. *Acts of Andrew*, GE 11; cf. GE 16 and 28; see *Christianizing Homer*, 124–25 and 132–33.

21. *Deipnosophists* 5.181c–191a. See also Eustathius's discussion of *Odyssey* 4.

22. Josef Martin, *Symposion. Die Geschichte einer literarischen Form,* Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 17 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1931), 33.

### *Chapter 11. Transfigurations*

1. Mark 9:2–8.

2. Bruce D. Chilton, "The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision," *NTStud* 27 (1980): 122. Other scholars have proposed parallels to the Enochic tradition, especially 1 Enoch 14–15, 2 Enoch 22, and 3 Enoch 15 and 48c. See W. Gerber, "Die Metamorphose Jesu, Mark 9.2 par." *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967): 385–95.

3. Exod. 16:1–27:21; cf. Mark 9:5.

4. Exod. 34:29–30; cf. Mark 9:3–6; cf. Exod. 34:29b (LXX): καταβαίνοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους; and Mark 9:9a: καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους.

5. *Odyssey* 16.168.

6. *Odyssey* 16.178–85 (Fagles 201–9).

7. *Homeric Hymn 5* (to Aphrodite) 84–87.

8. *Homeric Hymn 5* (to Aphrodite) 100–102.

9. Kearns, "Return," 5.

10. *Odyssey* 16.186–88 (Fagles 209–12).

11. *Odyssey* 16.196–200 (Fagles 223–28).

12. *Odyssey* 16.207–10.

13. *Odyssey* 16.301.

14. *Aeneid* 1.588–630.

15. The phrase translated here "his clothes became dazzling white" represents τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν. The participle στίλβοντα, "dazzling," "glistening," is a hapax in the New Testament; Matthew and Luke each deleted it. Within Greek literature at large, στίλβω is not particularly rare (it occurs several times in the Septuagint), but Homer uses it once in the *Odyssey* in a context similar to the passages here discussed.

At the beginning of Book 6, Odysseus, having suffered shipwreck, washed up on the shore of the Phaeacian island Scheria, entirely nude, and in this compromised condition asked for hospitality from maidens washing clothes at the shore. All fled but princess Nausicaa, who offered hospitality and some newly washed clothing. After he washed himself and put on the clothing (εἵματα = ἱμάτια, Mark 9:3), Athena transformed him into a marvelous sight—taller than before and festooned with cascading curls. Here and in the lines that follow, Athena's transfiguration of Odysseus strongly resembles his transfiguration before Telemachus: "[T]he goddess shed grace upon his head and shoulders. Then he went apart and sat down on the shore of the sea, gleaming [στίλβων] with beauty and grace; and the maiden marveled at him, and spoke to her fair-tressed handmaids, saying: 'Listen, white-armed maidens, to what I am about to say. Not without the will of all the gods who hold Olympus does this man come among the godlike Phaeacians. Before, he seemed to me uncouth, but now he is like the gods, who hold broad heaven'" (6.235–43). Like Jesus in Mark's transfiguration, Odysseus so glistened with glory that those who saw him took him for a god. In light of the rarity of στίλβω in early Christian literature, the similar usages of this verb as a participle to describe characters transformed into divine glory, one might suspect a literary connection between them.

16. Matt. 17:2 and Luke 9:29; cf. Exod. 34:29–35.

17. *Odyssey* 16.187–88.

18. See, for example, the comparative evidence cited in Nicholas J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 208–9.

19. See John Anthony McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition,* Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 9 (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), 100–115.

20. See Jerome H. Neyrey "The Apologetic Use of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16–21," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 504–19.

### *Chapter 12. Blind Seers*

1. Mark 8:18.

2. Mark 4:12. Both of these passages echo Isa. 6:9–10.

3. Here again the disciples play a role similar to that of Odysseus's crew, who likewise failed to understand suffering. See, for example, *Odyssey* 10.561–68.

4. Mark 10:46–48.

5. To be sure, Mark 12:35–37 narrates a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the title son of David as a messianic designation, but up to and including the story of Bartimaeus, the reader would have agreed that ὁ Χριστὸς υἱὸς Δαυίδ ἐστιν ("the Messiah is a son of David").

6. Mark 10:49–52.

7. *Odyssey* 10.493 and 12.267.

8. *Odyssey* 10.490–95 and the scholia, including Eustathius *Ad Homeri Odysseam* 1665 (on 10.492). See especially Apollodorus *Library* 3.6.7 (and Frazer's superb notes in the LCL edition); Hesiod *Melampodia* 2–3; Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 9 (445–47); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3.316–38; and Hyginus *Fabulae* 75. Other ancients claimed that Athena blinded Tiresias for peeping at her as she bathed (e.g., Callimachus *The Bathing of Pallas*). See Luc Brisson, *Le mythe de Tirésias. Essai d'analyse structurale,* Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 55 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976).

9. For example, Aeschylus *Seven against Thebes;* Sophocles *Antigone;* and Euripides *Bacchae* and *Phoenician Women.* Horace parodied Odysseus's encounter with Tiresias in *Satire* 2.5, where the hero asks not how to get home but how to get rich (Ball, "Popularity," 13).

10. *Oedipus Tyrannus* 371 and 413.

11. *Odyssey* 11.90–92.

12. Scholion on *Odyssey* 11.91; cf. Porphyry *On the Styx* (*apud* Stobaeus 1.424.7–24 [Wachsmuth and Hense]) and Eustathius on *Odyssey* 11.91).

13. *Odyssey* 11.100–104.

14. *Odyssey* 11.150–51.

15. *LIMC,* "Teiresias," item 10.

16. Brisson, *Tirésias,* plate 6.

17. *LIMC,* "Agamemnon," item 101.

18. *LIMC,* "Teiresias," item 11.

19. Brisson, *Tirésias,* plate 7; and *LIMC,* "Oidipous," item 84.

20. Brisson, *Tirésias,* plate 8.

21. *LIMC,* "Nekyia," item 12.

22. *Acts of Andrew,* P 162 and GE 2.

23. Compare Mark 5:41 and 15:22 and 34.

24. *Odyssey* 10.492 and 565, 11.90 and 165, and 23.323; cf. 12.267.

25. It also is possible that Bartimaeus is a patronymic, "son of Timai," but Mark's translation shows that this is not how he took it.

26. Matt. 20:30–31 and Luke 18:38.

27. Mark 5:7; cf. 12:35, and 14:61.

28. Tiresias, too, understood suffering. It was he who told Odysseus of his perils at sea and at home against the suitors.

29. *Protrepticus* 12.119.3.

### *Chapter 13. Untriumphal Entries*

1. Zech. 9:9 LXX. Matthew's recasting of Mark actually quotes this text (21:5).

2. *Odyssey* 6:36–38.

3. *Odyssey* 6.36–37 (Fagles 261–63), 240, and 242–43 (Fagles 266 and 268–69).

4. For example, *Odyssey* 6.238–43 and 280–81, and 7.199–210; cf. 5.36–37.

5. *Odyssey* 6.259–61 (Fagles 285–87) and 319–22.

6. *Odyssey* 7.81–85.

7. *Odyssey* 7.133 (Fagles 156–57).

8. *Odyssey* 7.298–301.

9. *Odyssey* 6.304–15 and 7.139–54.

10. *Odyssey* 7.159–60 and 162–66 (Fagles 189–90 and 192–98).

11. Compare *Argonautica* 3.210–14 and *Odyssey* 7.14–17.

12. *Argonautica* 3.215–16.

13. *Argonautica* 3.223–27.

14. Knight, *Renewal,* 226; see also 223–66, especially 258–60 and 265.

15. *Aeneid* 1.421–22 and 437 (Fitzgerald 577 and 595–96).

16. *Aeneid* 1.588–91 (Fitzgerald 800–803). See Henry W. Prescott, *The Development of Virgil's Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 186–89.

17. *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre* 15.

18. Holzberg, "*Historia,*" 95–98; see also Ball, "Popularity," 14.

19. Mark 11:1–2.

20. *Odyssey* 6.50–74 and Mark 11:4–6. Of the evangelists, only Mark notes the exact location of the colt, which corresponds with the location of the mules after Nausicaa returned from the beach. Compare *Odyssey* 7.3–4 ("[S]he halted the *mules at the outer gate* [ἐν προθύροισι]") and Mark 11:4 ("They went away and found a *colt tied near a door outside* [πρὸς θύραν ἔξω] in the street"). Mark's description of the colt "near a door outside in the street" seems gratuitous and was omitted by Matthew and Luke without damage to the story.

21. Mark 11:9. Odysseus, too, passed through fields (ἀγροί) on his way to the city (*Odyssey* 6.259).

The casting of garments before the feet of a monarch to keep his feet from touching the

earth was an eastern custom and apparently rare (see 2 Kings 9:13). Roman soldiers sometimes did the same for emperors on special occasions (Plutarch *Cato the Younger* 12.1). The most extended treatment of this ritual in ancient narrative appears in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon.* Clytemnestra and Aegisthus planned to kill Agamemnon when he returned from Troy, but to allay suspicions of their intention they gave the king a triumphal entry. As Agamemnon dismounted his chariot, Clytemnestra's attendants spread purple tapestries before him as she imagined the Trojans would have done to king Priam (905–11; cf. 935–36). For his part, Agamemnon feared that such extravagant treatment might produce divine envy. " 'Tis the gods we must honour thus; but for a mortal to tread upon broidered fineries is, to my judgment, not without ground for dread. I bid thee revere me not as a god, but as a man" (922–25). The king relented, in fear: "As I tread upon these purple vestments may I not be smitten from afar by any glance of Heaven's jealous eye" (946–47). Ironically, Agamemnon soon would die at the hands of the very people who insisted he walk on these garments. A similar irony appears in Mark.

22. Mark 12:35–37.

23. William R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree: A Redaction-Critical Analysis of the Cursing of the Fig-tree Pericope in Mark's Gospel and Its Relation to the Cleansing of the Temple Tradition,* JSNTSup 1 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 47.

24. Compare the following:

| *Odyssey* 7.14 and 43–45 | Mark 11:11 |
|---|---|
| Then Odysseus roused himself<br>*to go to the city. . . .*<br>*And Odysseus marveled at the harbors* and<br>the stately ships, at the meeting places<br>where the heroes themselves gathered,<br>and the walls, long and high and crowned<br>with palisades, a wonder to behold. | Then he<br>*entered Jerusalem* and *went into the temple;*<br>*and when he had looked around at*<br>*everything,* as it was already late,<br>he went out to Bethany with the twelve. |

25. Mark 11:12–14 and 20–21.

26. Matthew retained this pericope but omitted the phrase about fig season (21:19). Luke seems to have transformed the story into a parable, and here, too, is no trace of Mark's enigmatic phrase (13:6–9).

27. Guy Wagner, "Le figuier stérile et la destruction du temple: Mc 11.1–4 et 20–26," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 62 (1987): 335–42.

28. Telford, *Barren Temple,* 161–62. See also M. Wojciechowski, "Marc 11.14 et Tg. Gn. 3.22: Les fruits de la loi enlevés à Israel," *NTStud* 33 (1987): 287–89.

29. See Telford, *Barren Temple,* 195–96; and Richard H. Hiers, "Not the Season for Figs," *JBL* 87 (1968): 394–400.

30. *Odyssey* 7.114–21, 125–28, and 132–35 (Fagles 132–40, 147–49, and 155–57).

31. *Jewish War* 3.519. The parallels between Josephus's description and Alcinous's garden are more extensive than the mere mention of figs; see Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος," 13–16.

32. Maximus of Tyre imitated the description of Alcinous's garden when describing a garden on a luxury ship (30.3d; see Kaiser, "Odyssee-Szenen," 220).

33. *Odyssey* 7.43–45, 81–85, and 133–35.

34. The Phaeacians had heard of Odysseus's Trojan exploits before he arrived (*Odyssey* 8.72–82 and 489–520).

35. Mark 14:3. Paul Brooks Duff admirably described ironies in Mark's account by comparing it not with the entry of Odysseus into the city of the Phaeacians but with Greek and Roman victory processions ("The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem," *JBL* 111 [1992]: 55–71). Generals, kings, or emperors commonly paraded toward vanquished cities or their capitals in full regalia, riding a horse or a chariot and accompanied fore and aft by their armies and slaves to receive the praises of the residents. At the end of the procession the ruler often entered a palace or temple to celebrate the victory with a sacrifice or feast, some rite to symbolize his appropriation of the city. Duff sees Jesus' failure to perform any action in the temple as an ironic violation of the pattern. See also David R. Catchpole, "The 'Triumphal' Entry," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day,* ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 319–34, especially 319–22.

### *Chapter 14. Anointing Women*

1. *Odyssey* 19.36–40 (Fagles 37–43).

2. For example, *Odyssey* 4.69–81, 7.43–50, and 17.264–74.

3. *Odyssey* 19.95–307.

4. The similarities between Mark and the *Odyssey* suggest that Mark 13 is a πεῖρα, or "test." Penelope tested the beggar for evidence that he knew whereof he spoke, namely, that her husband was alive and would soon return (9.215–19). In addition to wanting to know the beggar's identity and place of origin, she demanded a sign (σῆμα) that she could trust his prediction (19.250). Similarly, in Mark 13 the disciples seek assurance, a sign (σημεῖον) concerning the return of the Son of Man.

5. Mark 13:21–37. Jesus' third-person predictions of the return of the Son of Man had already been established in pre-Marcan tradition; for example, Q 12:8 and 40 and 17:26 and 30.

6. Compare *Odyssey* 1.255–56, where Athena says, "Would that he might come now and take his stand at the outer gate [ἐν πρώτῃσι θύρῃσι] of the house."

7. Compare Isa. 13:10 and 34.4.

8. Compare *Odyssey* 14.160–64. The phrase translated here "this very month" employs λυκάβας, which by Homer's time was already "an obsolete word meaning 'interlunar period,' the dark moonless night of the new moon" (Heubeck, *Commentary* 3.92).

9. Already in Q one finds master-servant parables, some of which may have come from the historical Jesus (Q 12:35–38 and 42–46 and 19:12–27; see also 12:39–40). The early church allegorized such parables to refer to Jesus' absence and return at the Parousia.

10. *Odyssey* 21.207–16 and 22.462–77. Compare the following:

| *Odyssey* 19.313 | Mark 13:35 |
|---|---|
| Neither *shall Odysseus* any longer *come home* [οὔτε Ὀδυσεὺς ἔτι οἶκον ἐλεύσεται]. | [Y]ou do not know when *the master of the house will come* [οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας ἔρχεται]. |

11. *Odyssey* 19.317–21 (Fagles 364–69).

12. *Odyssey* 19.346–48 (Fagles 394–97).

13. *Odyssey* 19.350–52 (Fagles 398–401), 353–58, and 376–78 (Fagles 426–28).

14. *Odyssey* 19.385–93 and 467–75 (Fagles 437–45 and 528–38).

15. *Odyssey* 19.496–98 and 503–7. The washing and anointing of Odysseus here has an analog in *Odyssey* 4, where Helen, still in Troy, recognized Odysseus in disguise. She washed and anointed him, and swore "a mighty oath not to make him known among the Trojans as Odysseus before he reached the swift ships" (4.244–56).

16. For Penelope and Odysseus, see, for example, *LIMC*, "Penelope," items 33–36; for Eurycleia and Odysseus, see *LIMC*, "Eurykleia," items 5, 8, 9, and 17; "Eumaeus," item 19; and "Odysseus," item 214. Graphic depictions of the footwashing informed Christian depictions in the gospels: the woman who washed Jesus' feet in Luke 7:36–50 and John 12:1–8 (both of which redact Mark's story of the anointing of Jesus' head); and Jesus' washing of the disciples feet in John 13:20 (Hildegard Giess, *Die Darstellung der Fusswaschung Christi in den Kunstwerken des 4.–12. Jahrhunderts* [Rome: Casa Editrice Herder, 1962]).

17. *Libation Bearers* 167–94.

18. *Libation Bearers* 205–10 (Lattimore).

19. *Libation Bearers* 231–32.

20. *Electra* 885–919, 932–43, and 1222–23.

21. *Electra* 509–46.

22. *Electra* 573–74. Among the tokens that forced Oedipus to recognize he had killed his father and married his mother were the scars on his ankles from wounds inflicted when he was exposed as an infant (Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 993–98). See also the use of signs for recognitions in *Iphigenia at Tauris*.

23. *Poetics* 16 (1454b–55a). See Richardson, "Recognition."

24. *Clitopon and Leucippe* 8.5.1–2.

25. *Aethiopica* 5.5.

26. Ps.-Nonnos *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* 20.127.

27. Mark 14:3.

28. *Odyssey* 19.491–502.

29. Mark 14:10–11.

30. Scholion to *Odyssey* 1.429.

### *Chapter 15. Water Carriers*

1. Mark 14:13–16.

2. Gen. 24:10–16 and 29:1–30 and Exod. 2:15b–21. Robert Alter discusses this type-scene in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51–62. See also *Homeric Hymn* 2 (to Demeter) 98–107.

3. John 4:1–42.

4. The same type-scene appears at the beginning of *Odyssey* 7, when Athena appears to the hero in the form of a woman carrying a jar outside the city of the Phaeacians and offers to escort him inside (7.14–38).

5. *Odyssey* 10.105–13.

6. *Argonautica* 1.936–60 and 989–1011 (Knight, *Renewal*, 147–52). See also Ovid

*Metamorphoses* 14.233–42. An Italian fresco now at the Vatican depicts the Laestrygonian maiden greeting Odysseus's three comrades (*LIMC*, "Laistrygones," item 1).

7. For example, Athenagoras *Legatio* 35.4 and *De resurrectione* 8.2–3; Theophilus of Antioch *Ad Autolycum* 3.5; Tertullian *Apology* 2.5, 7.1, 8.2–5, and 9.9 and *Adversus Marcionem* 1.1; the *Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne* (*apud* Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.14); Ps.-Justin *Ad graecos;* Minucius Felix *Octavius* 9 and 30; and Athenasius *Contra gentes* 25. On these charges of cannibalism, see especially Albert Henrichs, "Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians: A Reconsideration," in *Kyriakon,* 2 vols., ed. Patrick Granfiled and Josef A. Jungmann, Festschrift Johannes Quasten (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 1.18–35. The story of Andrew rescuing Matthias from cannibals at the beginning of the *Acts of Andrew* probably was a counterattack on pagan complaints; see MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer,* 35–39.

### *Chapter 16. Last Suppers before Hades*

1. Heb. 5:7–10.

2. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: The Commentary of the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels,* 2 vols., Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 227–33 and 305–7.

3. Ps. 42:6 and 11 and 43:5, and Jonah 4:8 (LXX: Ps. 41:6 and 11 and 42:5, and Jonah 4:9).

4. Werner H. Kelber, "Mark 14:32–42: Gethsemane: Passion Christology and Discipleship Failure," *ZNW* 63 (1972): 176.

5. Book 10 generated two Marcan episodes already discussed. At the beginning one reads of Aeolus's bag of winds, which Mark used as his model for Jesus' stilling the storm. The preceding chapter compared Jesus' sending two disciples to find the upper room with Odysseus's sending a search party to investigate the island of the Laestrygonians, which occurs toward the middle of Book 10.

6. *Odyssey* 10.478–79.

7. *Odyssey* 10.490–95.

8. Compare Ps. 42:5 and Jonah 4:9 LXX.

9. *Odyssey* 12.21–22.

10. 1 Pet. 3:19; Ignatius *Magnesians* 9.2; *Gospel of Peter* 10:38–42; *Odes of Solomon* 42.14; *Sibylline Oracles* 1.377–78 and 8.310–11; *Epistula Apostolorum* 27; Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 4.27.1–2; Clement *Stromateis* 6.6.27–53; *Gospel of Nicodemus* (*Acts of Pilate*) 17–27; and Hippolytus *Antichrist* 26 and 45. The tour of hell that once appeared in the *Acts of Andrew* seems to have emulated Homer's nekyia (MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer,* 77–101).

11. Heubeck, *Commentary,* 2.69.

12. According to David Daube, Jesus sought death in the garden ("Death as a Release in the Bible," *Novum Testamentum* 5 [1962]: 98). L. A. Ruprecht Jr. gives a fascinating interpretation of Mark's use of fate and suffering in light of Homeric epic and Greek tragedy ("Mark's Tragic Vision: Gethsemane," *Religion and Literature* 24 [1992]: 1–22, especially 17).

13. Compare the ancient complaint that Homer was a liar because he recorded a pri-

vate conversation between Hera and Zeus on Mount Ida (Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 11, *Troiana*).

14. *Odyssey* 10.487 and 496.

15. Mark 14:51–52.

16. See Frans Neirynck, "La fuite du jeune homme en Mc 14,51–52." *ETL* 55 (1979): 55–59.

17. *Clement of Alexandria and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); see also his "Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark: The Score at the End of the First Decade," *HTR* 75 (1982): 450.

18. Helmut Koester, "History and Development of Mark's Gospel (From Mark to *Secret Mark* and 'Canonical Mark')," in *Colloquy on New Testament Studies: A Time for Reappraisal and Fresh Approaches*, ed. Bruce Corley (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 35–57; Hans-Martin Schenke (who sees the fleeing youth as a symbol for the soul's successful escape from malevolent archons), "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," *Second Century* 4 (1984): 65–82; John Dominic Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985), 91–121; Marvin W. Meyer (who argues for the suppression in Mark of an original subplot concerning the difficulties of discipleship), "The Youth in the Secret Gospel of Mark," *Semeia* 49 (1990): 129–53; and Philip Sellew, "Secret Mark and the History of Canonical Mark," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 242–57.

19. Perhaps the most thorough treatment is that of Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary of His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 603–23; but see also Frans Neirynck, "The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark," in *The New Testament in Early Christianity: La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif*, ed. Jean-Marie Sevrin, BETL 86 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 168–70.

20. *Odyssey* 10.552–60 (Fagles 608–17).

21. *Odyssey* 10.565 (Fagles 617).

22. According to Empedocles, the primordial soul became clothed "in the unfamiliar tunic of flesh" (Empedocles frag. 126). At death, said Plato, souls leave their bodies and ascend to judgment naked so that nothing will be hidden from the judges (*Gorgias* 523). According to Plotinus, the mystical experience of the philosopher is the "stripping off of the garments with which we were clothed when we descended from mind and reascending in our naked selves" (*Ennead* 1.6.7.5–7). The Jewish philosopher Philo interpreted the "coat of skins" given Adam and Eve after their fall to be the body (*Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1:53 and 4:78). (The "coat of skins" in Genesis 3 was taken to be the body also by Julius Cassianus [*apud* Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 3.14.95; cf. 3.14.92]; Ptolemy [*apud* Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 1.1.10 and Tertullian *Adversus Valentinianos* 24.3]; and Theodotus [*apud* Clement of Alexandria *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 55]. See also Tertullian *De resurrectione carnis* 7 and *De cultu feminarum* 1.1., and Origen *Contra Celsum* 4.40.) According to Philo, the soul that pursues God already has "disrobed itself of the body . . . , [and has] fled far away" (*Allegorical Interpretation* 2.55; cf. 56). See also Maximus of Tyre 2.10b and 11e; Proclus *Institutio theologica* prop. 209; and Porphyry *De abstinentia* 1.31 and 2.46.

23. 1 Cor. 15:53–54 and 2 Cor. 5:1–4.

*Chapter 17. Death Predictions*

1. The *Odyssey* itself probably is a transvaluative imitation of the *Iliad.*

2. Homer's depiction of Hector has generated several important studies, including W. Schadewaldt, "Hektor in der Ilias," *Weiner Studien* 69 (1956): 5–25; S. Farron, "The Character of Hector in the *Iliad,*" *AC* 21 (1978): 39–57; Wilhelm Metz, "Hektor als der homerischste aller homerischen Helden," *Gymnasium* 97 (1990): 385–404; and James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the "Iliad": The Tragedy of Hector,* 2d ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

3. Seth L. Schein, *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's "Iliad"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 180.

4. Farron, "Character," 40. See also Redfield, *Nature,* 109–27.

5. *Iliad* 24.66–70 (Fagles 81–86).

6. *Iliad* 24.749–50 and 258–59 (Fagles 306–7); cf. 13.54 (Fagles 67), where Poseidon states that Hector claimed "to be the son of high and mighty Zeus."

7. Redfield, *Nature,* 29.

8. The Emperor Constantine argued that as Achilles assaulted Troy (according to a Vergilian text), Christ assaulted the world (Eusebius *The Oration of Constantine* 20).

9. *Iliad* 1.352; cf. 1.416 and 505–6, 18.88–96 and 328–32, and 21.110–13 and 277–78.

10. *Iliad* 9.411–6 (Fagles 499–505); cf. 18.440–41 and 24.131–32.

11. Compare *Iliad* 19.420–23 and 22.365–66.

12. Mark 8:31–32, 9:31, and 10:32–34. Jesus also predicts his death in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (12:6–8) and at the Last Supper (14:18–21).

13. For a sustained treatment of Hector's delusions of grandeur and fears of defeat, see Farron, "Character," and Schein, *Mortal Hero,* 181–86.

14. *Iliad* 6.407–10 and 447–52 (Fagles 530–32).

15. *Iliad* 6.526–29 (Fagles 626–31).

16. For example, *Iliad* 12.10, 15.68–71 and 612–14, 16.800, 18.133, 21.296–97, and 22.5–6 and 209–13.

17. *Iliad* 16.859–61 (Fagles 1006–9); cf. 18.305–9.

18. *Iliad* 22.104–10 and 129–39.

19. Mark 8:33.

20. Mark 9:32 and 34.

21. Mark 10:37.

*Chapter 18. Violent Deaths*

1. Brown gives a useful assessment of these proposals in *Death,* 1.53–57. See also the thorough treatment by Marion L. Soards, "The Question of a PreMarcan Passion Narrative," published as Appendix 9 in Brown, *Death,* 2.1492–1524.

2. See, for example, the essays in Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); and Peter Dschulnigg, *Sprache, Redaktion und Intention des Markus-Evangeliums: Eigentümlichkeiten der Sprache des Markus-Evangeliums und ihre Bedeutung für die Redaktionskritik,* Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge 11 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986), 587–89.

3. Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 153. Mark alludes to Dan. 7:13 and Psalms 22 and 69; he may also echo Zechariah 9–14, Isaiah 53, Amos 8:9, and Wisdom of Solomon 2.

4. *Iliad* 10.46–50; cf. 5.603 (of Ares), 15.637–38, and 17.101.

5. *Iliad* 11.363 (Fagles 427).

6. *Iliad* 15.231–32 (Fagles 275–76).

7. *Iliad* 15.254–57 (Fagles 302–7).

8. *Iliad* 15.291 (Fagles 343: "again some god swoops down and saves his Hector"), 306–11, and 326–27, 16.93–94 and 710–25, 17.71–87 and 582–9, 18.456, 19.413–14, and 20.375–80.

9. *Iliad* 16.844–49 (Fagles 988–93; Fagles' italics).

10. *Iliad* 20.443–51.

11. *Iliad* 22.131–66 and 167–85.

12. *Iliad* 22.208–13 (Fagles 249–54).

13. Many interpreters have seen the offering of wine prior to the execution as a fulfillment of Ps. 69:22, a verse fulfilled in Mark 15:36. More likely, Mark understood the offering of wine as an anesthetic, refused by Jesus as evidence of his courageous acceptance of his fate. Compare Jesus' rejection of "wine mixed with myrrh" with Hector's rejection of wine mixed with honey in *Iliad* 6.264–65: "Don't offer me mellow wine, mother, not now — / you'd sap my limbs, I'd lose my nerve for war" (Fagles 313–14).

14. *Iliad* 22.226–45, 248–59, and 270–71 (Fagles 319).

15. *Iliad* 22.279–86 (Fagles 329–38).

16. For useful discussion of this literary form see Françoise Letoublon, "Défi et combat dans l'Iliade," *Revue des études grecques* 96 (1983): 27–48; and Ward Parks, *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative: The Homeric and Old English Traditions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), especially 42–71.

17. For example, *Iliad* 5.633, 7.234, 8.161–62, and 17.12. Sarpedon acknowledged Tlepolemus to be the son of Heracles, who single-handedly conquered Troy (5.648–50), and Aeneas acknowledged Achilles to be the son of the goddess Thetis (20.206–9).

18. For example, *Iliad* 5.635–37, 17.19, and 20.200–202.

19. For example, *Iliad* 7.232, 13.448, 20.257–58, 21.160, and 22.268–69. See also 17.30–31 and 20.196–97.

20. *Iliad* 22.285–86 (Fagles 337–38).

21. *Iliad* 22.327 (Fagles 386).

22. For example, Pandarus, who boasted that he would slay Diomedes with his spear, fell to the spear of Diomedes (compare 5.279 and 290–91). Tlepolemus predicted he would send the soul of Sarpedon to Hades, but he fell to Sarpedon instead (compare 5.646 and 653–59). Euphorbus warned Menelaus not to fight him lest he lose his life, but it would be Menelaus who would live to fight again (compare 17.17 and 45–49). Perhaps the best example of an ironic taunt is that of Hector to Ajax in 13.824–32: much of the harm he intended for Ajax would fall on him.

23. Mark 15:29–30.

24. *Iliad* 17.200 and 442 and *Odyssey* 5.285 and 376, 17.465 and 491, and 20.184. Most

commentators attribute the wagging of the heads to Mark's indebtedness to Ps. 22:7–8 (LXX 21:8–9): "all who watch me mock me; they speak with their lips, they shake their heads. He hoped in the Lord; let him rescue him. Let him save him." See also Wisd. 2:17–18.

25. Compare the taunts by Trojans against Achaeans who expected to destroy Ilium: 16.830–33 and 21.583–85.

26. Mark 15:31–32a.

27. For example, three times Achilles answered taunts only with ferocious combat (*Iliad* 20.431–43 and 21.153–82 and 583–98).

28. *Iliad* 22.294–303 (Fagles 346–59).

29. *Iliad* 22.361–62.

30. Mark 15:3.

31. Mark 15:34. Many interpreters, beginning with Luke, have interpreted this darkness as a sign of God's judgment on Jesus' executioners, not as a sign of abandonment (e.g., Brown, *Death,* 1034–36), but Mark's Jesus seems not to have understood it as such. The darkness apparently prompted the cry of despair. In favor of this reading is the tightening circle around Jesus at the cross. The first taunt was by passersby, the second by those who had condemned Jesus to die, and the third by those crucified with him, whom one might expect to have been sympathetic to his plight. The advent of darkness at noon, then, completes Jesus' isolation; even God had abandoned him.

32. Cf. *Iliad* 5.68 and 20.417.

33. Mark 15:38. At Jesus' baptism, narrated at the beginning of the gospel, the heavens were rent (σχιζομένους), the Spirit (πνεῦμα) descended (καταβαῖνον) on him, and God proclaimed him his "beloved son [ὑιός]" (1:10–11). Mark's account of Jesus' death echoes this passage: when he expired (ἐξέπνευσεν), "the veil of the sanctuary was rent [ἐσχίσθη] in two, from top to bottom [ἕως κάτω]," and the centurion mocked Jesus as "God's son [ὑιός]" (15:37–39). If Mark, like other early Christians, understood baptism to symbolize death and resurrection, it would further cement these two passages together as an *inclusio,* one passage at the beginning and one at the end of the Gospel.

34. This is how some early Christians understood it (see Brown, *Death,* 1099–1102, 1115–17, and 1185).

35. See especially Schein, *Mortal Hero,* 168–95.

36. *Iliad* 22.408–11 (Fagles 481–84, altered). Josephus imitated this passage in *Jewish War* 3.202 (Kopidakis, "Ιώσηφος," 6).

37. *Iliad* 13.772, 15.557, 22.411, and 24.728.

38. Mark 15:38.

39. *Iliad* 22.507 (Fagles 595–96). See also Priam's appeal to Hector not to fight Achilles on the grounds that his death would spell doom for the city (22.56–76).

40. *Iliad* 24.727–32 (Fagles 856–62).

41. Schein, *Mortal Hero,* 9. So also Redfield: "The fall of Troy . . . is not part of the story of the *Iliad;* it is, however, part of the fatality of the poem. We know that Troy will fall, and this knowledge is, for us, part of the meaning of the death of Hector" (*Nature,* 124).

42. Mark 15:39.

43. Matt. 27:54.

44. Luke 23:47.

45. Parks calls such gloats "vaunts" and discusses them in *Verbal Dueling*, 72–76.

46. On gloating speeches in the *Iliad*, see Martin Mueller, *The Iliad* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 93–95. The epic contains at least fifteen gloats over fallen warriors.

47. *Iliad* 22.393–94 (Fagles 463–65).

48. S. Farron, "The Portrayal of Women in the Iliad," *AC* 22 (1978): 15–31.

49. On Hector and women see Redfield, *Nature*, 121–23.

50. *Iliad* 24.748 and 762–75; cf. 6.343–58.

51. *Iliad* 6.429–30 (Fagles 509–10); cf. 6.413 and 421–24. It is tempting to compare this passage with Mark 3:34–35: " 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.' "

52. *Iliad* 6.86–115, 237–41, 269–80, 286–311, 403, 441–43, and 494–502, 16.830–33, 18.122–24, and 22.56–58, 105–7, and 433–43.

53. *Iliad* 6.500 (Fagles 597–98).

54. *Iliad* 24.729–30 (Fagles 859–60).

55. *Iliad* 22.405–7 (Fagles 478–80).

56. *Iliad* 22.430–36 (Fagles 505–7 and 509–13).

57. *Iliad* 22.462–63 (Fagles 543–44).

58. *Iliad* 22.473–76 (Fagles 556–60).

59. *Iliad* 22.515 (Fagles 606).

60. Mark 15:40–41.

61. R. A. Coles, "A New Fragment of a Post-Classical Tragedy from Oxyrhynchus," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 15 (1968): 110–18.

62. P. J. Sijpsteijn, "Scholia minora zu Homer *Ilias* 22.184–256," *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987): 158–61.

63. Compare Homer's description of the two springs outside Troy in *Iliad* 22.145–56 with Josephus's description of two springs in *Jewish War* 2.186–89 (Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος," 15–16). The Jewish historian borrows a phrase from Homer in describing Isaac as Abraham's son when he was "on the threshold of old age" (*Antiquities* 1.222). This phrase appears twice in the *Iliad* (22.60 and 24.487) and once in the *Odyssey* (15.348). If he had in mind a single text, it probably was *Iliad* 22.60 (Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος," 6).

64. *On Literary Composition* 18.

65. *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 25.

66. *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 28. See MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer*, 53–55. A chapter in Gregory of Tour's epitome of the *Acts of Andrew* likewise may transvalue Hector (GE 14; *Christianizing Homer*, 128–29). One Christian apologist cited Achilles' desecration of Hector's corpse as evidence of pagan savagery (Ps-Justin *Cohoratio ad gentiles* 30).

67. *Iliad* 22.347.

68. G. Binder, "Eine Polemik des Porphyrios gegen die allegorische Auslegung des Alten Testaments durch die Christen," *ZPE* 3 (1968): 81–95.

69. Hans Smolenaars provides a useful overview of Vergil's use of *Iliad* 22 ("Hector's Death and Augustan Politics," in *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*, ed. J. M. Bremer et al. [Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994], 134–36). See also K. W. Gransden, *Virgil's "Iliad": An Essay on Epic Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 192–217.

70. Brooks Otis, "The Originality of the Aeneid," in *Virgil,* ed. D. R. Dudley, Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 27.

71. *Aeneid* 12.623–30; this passage was inspired by Athena's disguising herself as Deiphobus and promising Hector help in *Iliad* 22.

72. *Aeneid* 12.725–875.

73. *Aeneid* 12.894–95 (Fitzgerald 1213–16).

74. *Aeneid* 12.915–19 (Fitzgerald 1242–48).

75. *Aeneid* 12.952, *Iliad* 22.362–63, and Mark 15:37. Lucan imitated Hector's last speech and death in *Civil War* 7.599–615.

76. *Aeneid* 9.473–97. The rescue of Hector's corpse by Priam influenced Turnus's request that Aeneas return his body to his father (12.930–38).

77. See *Aeneid* 12.653 and 669–75. "The hearer knows at the end of the 'Iliad' that Troy is doomed by Hector's death. Just so the hearer knows at the end of the 'Aeneid' that Rome will rise by Turnus' death" (Georg Nicholas Knauer, "Vergil and Homer," *ANRW* 2.31.2:882).

### *Chapter 19. Hydropatetics*

1. *Iliad* 24.331–37 (Fagles 392–400).

2. *Iliad* 24.340–42 and 345–48 (Fagles 404–6 and 409–13).

3. *Iliad* 24.351–60 (Fagles 416–25).

4. *Iliad* 24.361–64 and 370–71 (Fagles 427–30 and 437–38).

5. *Iliad* 24.440–42 (Fagles 519–22).

6. *Iliad* 24.460–62 (Fagles 540–43).

7. *Odyssey* 1.96–99 and 102–3 (Fagles 113–15 and 119–20). See Heubeck, *Commentary,* 1.87. On the relationship between the last book of the *Iliad* and the first book of the *Odyssey,* see Nicholas J. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary,* vol. 6, *Books 21–24* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21–24.

8. *Odyssey* 2.267–95.

9. *Odyssey* 5.44–54 (Fagles 48–59). On the extensive parallels between Books 1 and 5, see Hansen, *Conference,* 28–33.

10. *Odyssey* 5.79–80 (Fagles 89).

11. These texts are judiciously treated by Werner Berg in *Die Rezeption alttestamentlicher Motive im Neuen Testament dargestellt an den Seewandelerzählungen,* HochschulSammlung Theologie, Exegese 1 (Freiburg: HochschulVerlag, 1979). See also John Paul Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:15b–21,* Analecta Biblica 87 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981); Barry Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Anēr Concept as an Interpretive Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark,* WUNT ns 40 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991), 145–52; and W. Richard Stegner, "Jesus Walking on the Water: Mark 6.45–52," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel,* ed. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner, JSNTSup 104 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 212–34.

12. For example, *Iliad* 13.10–38; Euphemus (Apollonius *Argonautica* 1.179–84 and Hyginus *Fabulae* 14); and Orion (Apollodorus *Library* 1.4.3, and Hesiod frag. 148 [Merkelbach; = 182 Rzach]). So-called divine men also walked on water (e.g., Isocrates *Pan-*

*egyricus* 88–89; Josephus *Antiquities* 19.1.1; and Iamblicus *De vita pythagorica* 28 [135–36]), a pretension ridiculed by Lucian (*Lover of Lies* 13 and *True Story* 2.4). See also Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 3.30 and 11.129. In the opinion of Artemidorus, an ancient dream analyst, dreams about walking on water were sufficiently common to merit interpretation (*Oneirocritica* 3.16). For discussions of Greek water-walkers, see Berg, *Rezeption,* 61–76; and Blackburn, *Theios Anēr,* 145–47.

13. Mark 6:45–47.

14. *Iliad* 24.360–61 and Mark 6:50.

15. *Iliad* 24.370–71 (Fagles 437–38).

16. Peter Hofrichter has made a strong case that the visit of Iris to Priam influenced four appearances of angels in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:8–23 and 26–38, and 2:8–20; and Acts 12:6–12; "Parallele zum 24. Gesang der Ilias in den Engelerscheinungen des lukanischen Doppelwerkes," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 1 [1993]: 60–76). Some of the motifs Luke allegedly borrowed seem to have been borrowed also by Mark: the arrival of the messenger, the terror of the addressee, a command not to fear (using some form of θάρσειν, and the identification of the messenger ("I am X").

17. *Iliad* 24.396–97 and 460.

18. *Iliad* 24.440–42 (Fagles 520–22) and Mark 6:51.

19. *Aeneid* 4.219–78.

20. See MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer,* 58–59.

21. Priam's visit to Achilles also may have informed the *Acts of Andrew* (see *AAMt* 32–33 and GE 14; *Christianizing Homer,* 58–59 and 128–29).

### *Chapter 20. Rescued Corpses*

1. Mark 15:42–43.

2. See *Iliad* 24.299–301 and 424–31.

3. *Iliad* 24.351, 362–63, 365–67, and 444.

4. Mark 15:42.

5. *Iliad* 24.519 and 565–66 (Fagles 663–64). On the dangers of Priam's mission, see also 24.152, 181, 201–8, 224–26, 324–28, 364–65, 505 (ἔτλην), and 682–88.

6. The parallels between Mark's Joseph and Homer's Priam are less visible in the other gospels. Matthew says only that Joseph was a wealthy disciple and says nothing of the dangers of his mission (27:57). Luke retains Mark's comment that Joseph was a member of the council but adds that he had not consented to their condemnation of Jesus (23:50–51). Like Matthew, Luke omitted the telling participle τολμήσας, "daring." The participle also is lacking in John, who says Joseph was a clandestine disciple (19:38).

7. Mark 15:25 and 33–37.

8. "It was a stereotyped picture that the crucified victim served as food for wild beasts and birds of prey" (Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977], 87; cf. 76). See Pseudo-Manetho *Apotelesmatica* 4.198–200; Horace *Epistles* 1.16.46–48; Seneca *Epistles* 101.10–14; Juvenal *Satires* 14.77–78; Martial *Liber spectaculorum* 7; Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 8.22.5; *Acts of Andrew,* Passion 54; and Isidore of Seville *Etymologia* 5.27.34.

9. One ruthless ruler "crucified the bodies of all who had died by their own hands, leaving

them to be gazed at by their fellow citizens and also torn to pieces by beasts and birds of prey" (Pliny the Elder *Historia naturalis* 36.107). See also Plutarch *Cleomenes* 38. Seneca the Elder *Controversies* 8.4: "The bodies of the crucified flow down [i.e., rot] from their crosses into their graves." See also Lucan *Civil War* 6.543–49.

10. *Flaccus* 83–84.

11. Mark 15:42–45.

12. Commentary on Matt. 27:54.

13. *Iliad* 22.335–36 and 339.

14. *Iliad* 23.21 (Fagles 24); cf. 1.3–5 and 24.183. According to Charles Segal, the desecration of the dead is an organizing theme for the epic as a whole (*The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad,* Mnemosyne Supplements 17 [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971]).

15. *Iliad* 23.184–91 (Fagles 211–20); cf. 24.18–21.

16. *Iliad* 24.411–14 (Fagles 484–88).

17. *Iliad* 24.478–84.

18. *Iliad* 24.582.

19. *Iliad* 24.795–98 (Fagles 934–37).

20. Margaret Alexiou describes these practices in *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), especially 4–7, 27–29, and 39–42.

21. Mark's strange order of events—shrouding, burying, and then anointing—bothered the other evangelists. Matthew failed to mention that the women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus. Luke had the women preparing "spices and unguents" but fell short of saying that the women intended to anoint the body. John, knowing how one ought to treat a corpse, made Joseph and Nicodemus do the job: "They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews" (19:40). When Mary arrived at the tomb Easter morning, she had nothing of the sort left to do. Similarly, the *Gospel of Peter* says that Joseph prepared the body before shrouding it, but Mary Magdalene, "for fear of the Jews," had not readied the Lord's tomb as women usually did for loved ones, so they had to do so Easter morning. The tomb needed attention, not the corpse. Only in Homer and Mark do women expressly anoint, or at least intend to anoint, a fallen hero (*Iliad* 24.582: ἀλεῖψας; Mark 16:2: ἀλείψωσον).

22. *Iliad* 24.699–702.

23. Mark 15:47–16:1.

24. *Iliad* 24.722–23 (Fagles 849–50), 746–47 (Fagles 878–79), and 762 (Fagles 894).

25. Mark 16:1.

26. Mark 15:40.

27. Mark 15:47.

28. For example, Luke 7:37–39 and 8:2 and John 12:3.

29. For example, *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*apud* Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 3.6.45 and *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 67).

30. Götz Beck argues that much of *Odyssey* 10 imitates *Iliad* 24 ("Beobachtungen zur Krike-Episode in der Odyssee," *Philologus* 109 [1965]: 1–29). The last book of the *Iliad* likewise seems to have informed the last book of the *Odyssey* (Richardson, *Iliad,* 6.23).

31. *Iliad* 6.264–65.

32. *Iliad* 22.362 (ψυχὴ δ[ὲ] . . . Ἄϊδόσδε βεβήκει) and *Odyssey* 10.560 (ψυχὴ δ' Ἄϊδόσδε κατῆλθεν).

33. *Iliad* 22.386 (ἄκλαυτος ἄθαπτος); *Odyssey* 11.54 (ἄκλαυτον καὶ ἄθαπτον).

34. Compare *Odyssey* 11.66–68 with *Iliad* 22.338; cf. 15.665.

35. Compare *Odyssey* 11.73 with *Iliad* 22.358.

36. Compare *Iliad* 23.69–96 with *Odyssey* 11.76; see Heubeck, *Commentary,* 2.81.

37. Compare *Iliad* 24.714, 785–86, 788, and 794 with *Odyssey* 12.8–12.

38. *Iliad* 24.201–3 and *Odyssey* 12.16–20. Compare also *Iliad* 24.354–57 with *Odyssey* 10.266–69, *Iliad* 24.346–48 with *Odyssey* 10.274–79, and *Iliad* 24.357 with *Odyssey* 10.481. See Heubeck, *Commentary,* 2.58–59, 64, and 68.

39. See Karl Deichgräber, *Der letzte Gesang der Ilias,* Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Mainz (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972), 118–26.

40. *Aeneid* 1.483–87, 6.212–25, 9.465–97, and 11.299–202. See Knauer, "Vergil and Homer," 882.

41. The *Acts of Andrew* tells of a lad who died, strangled by a demon. His father "wept profusely" and brought him to Andrew, who healed him. "They led him out to the house with torches and lamps—it was already past nightfall—and brought him inside the house" (GE 14). Several details in the story as well as its placement in the *Acts* point to his youth as an ersatz-Hector, now raised from the dead (see MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer,* 128–29). According to Marilyn B. Skinner, the poet Erinna imitated the laments of the Trojan women in mourning the death of her friend ("Briseis, the Trojan Women, and Erinna," *Classical World* 75 [1982]: 265–69). Josephus seems to have imitated Hecuba's complaint that Priam had lost his senses in deciding to go to Achilles to rescue the corpse. Compare *Iliad* 24.200–202 with *Antiquities* 16.376–80 (Kopidakis, "Ἰώσηφος," 22–23).

42. Richardson, *Iliad,* 6.291.

### *Chapter 21. Tombs at Dawn*

1. *Iliad* 24.550–51; but see 15.286–88 (Fagles 339–40): "Look, a genuine miracle right before my eyes! / Hector's escaped again, he's risen from the dead [ἀνέστη]!" Despite Achilles' lamentations for Patroclus and his extravagant funeral, "he did not raise him up [ἀνέστησεν]" (24.756).

2. Mark 8:31; cf. 9:9 (ἀναστῇ), 9:10 (ἀναστῆναι) and 31 (ἀναστήσεται), and 10:34 (ἀναστήσεται).

3. For example, Matt. 28:9–10 and 16–20, Luke 24:13–49, John 20:11–21:23, and Acts 1:3–11.

4. Ancient texts occasionally refer to angels as young men, but they nonetheless make their heavenly identities unambiguous (Herman C. Waetjen, "The Ending of Mark and the Gospel's Shift in Eschatology," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 [1965]: 114–16; and Allen K. Jenkins, "Young Man or Angel?" *ExpTim* 94 [1983]: 237–39).

5. Mark 1:13, 8:38, 12:25, and 13:27 and 32.

6. Mark 16:5–8.

7. Mark 16:9–18 and the shorter ending, Matt. 28:8–20, Luke 24:9–51, John 20:14–21:29, and *Gospel of Peter* 12:50–14:60.

8. Andrew T. Lincoln provides a clear presentation of the issue in "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *JBL* 108 (1989): 284 and n. 3. See the survey of research by Frans Neirynck in "Marc 16,1–8. Tradition et rédaction," *ETL* 56 (1980): 56–88, reprinted in *Evangelica I,* ed. F. van Segbroeck, BETL 60 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1982), 239–

72. See also his update in *Evangelica II,* ed. F. van Segbroeck, BETL 99 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), 796–97.

9. Evidence for the oracle survives in three sources: an early stage in the composition of the so-called *Pseudo-Clementines* (*Recognitions* 1.37.2 [Syriac] and 1.39.3 [Latin]); Eusebius of Caesarea (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3); and Epiphanius of Salamis (*De mensuris et ponderibus* 15 and *Adversus haereses* 29.7; cf. 30.2). Willi Marxsen relates the oracle to Mark 14:28 and 16:7, and assumes that a Christian community was indeed founded in Galilee, despite the silence of the women in Mark 16.8 (*Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel,* trans. Roy A. Harrisville et al. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969], especially 115 and n. 176).

10. Mark 13:14–17.

11. Mark 13:18–20.

12. Mark 14:28.

13. Mark 15:26. For later references to Jesus' shroud, see John 20:6; *Acts of Pilate* 15:6; and a fragment of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* in Jerome *On Illustrious Men* 2.

14. Robin Scroggs and K. I. Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ (Mk. 14:51–52, 16:1–8)," *JBL* 92 (1974): 531–48; B. H. Standaert, *L'évangile selon Marc. Composition et genre littéraire* (Nijmegen: Stichting Studentenpaers, 1978), 496–618; and Stephen R. Johnson, "The Identity and Significance of the Neaniskos in Mark," *Forum* 8 (1992): 123–39.

15. See the important discussion of Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Garments of Shame," *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 217–38. Some scholars object that clear evidence of baptismal exchanges of garments is unavailable prior to the second half of the second century and that Mark elsewhere gives no evidence that he understood baptism as dying and rising with Christ (e.g., Michel Gourges, "À propos du symbolisme christologique et baptismale de Marc 16.5," *NTStud* 27 [1981]: 675). These objections are jejune: one simply cannot now know Mark's understanding of baptism or the mechanics of the rite in his community—or for that matter, in any other Christian community until the second century.

16. See Dennis R. MacDonald, *There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism,* Harvard Dissertations in Religion 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 33–36, 43–46, and 50–63.

17. *Tripartite Tractate* 128.19–24; *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 8.22 and *Recognitions* 4.35; and *Acts of Barnabas* 12–13. Morton Smith rightly highlights the baptismal symbolism and setting of Secret Gospel fragment one (*Secret Gospel,* 167–88). If the fragments of Secret Mark are an early interpretation of the naked young man in 14:51–52, it provides evidence that at least one ancient reader took this imagery sacramentally.

18. Harry Fleddermann, "The Flight of the Naked Young Man (Mark 14:51–52)" *CBQ* 41 (1979): 418; Gourges, "Symbolisme," 675–76; and Brown, *Death,* 299–303.

19. Fleddermann, "Flight," 417.

20. *Odyssey* 12.8–12.

21. *Iliad* 24.785–86, 788, and 794.

22. Mark 16:6.

23. *Iliad* 24.785–86 and 788–89; *Odyssey* 12.7–10; and Mark 16:2. Just before the burial of Elpenor, Homer wrote of Odysseus's arrival at Circe's island, "where is the dwelling of early dawn, and the risings of the sun [ἀντολαὶ Ἠελίοιο]." The similarities to Mark's ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου may be coincidental; then again, maybe not.

24. *Republic* 621b.

25. *Sign of Socrates* 590b.

26. Acts 20:11. The pattern in necromancies is to have the dead, like Dracula, return to Hades at dawn: daylight is reserved for the living. See Lucan *Civil War* 6.828; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 14; Philostratus *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.16; and Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 2.26.

### *Chapter 22. Conclusion*

1. For example, see the collection of essays edited by David E. Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres,* Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Studies 21 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). In his own important comparative study, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment,* Aune casts his net across the major cultures of the Mediterranean but never mentions Homer or Euripides, or any other Greek poet for that matter.

2. The address was published as "Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft," *NTStud* 40 (1994): 321–57. The quotation appears on page 346, and the emphasis is Hengel's; the translation is mine.

3. For example, Papias of Hierapolis *apud* Eusebius of Caesarea *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15.

4. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78; cf. 44: "It does not appear that the authors of the early Gospels were eyewitnesses to the events they narrate. But they must have gotten their stories from somewhere."

5. Thomas Louis Brodie, "Luke 7,36–50 as an Internalization of 2 Kings 4,1–37: A Study in Luke's Use of Rhetorical Imitation," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 480.

6. Brodie, "Luke," 480. Even the most obvious imitations tax one's interpretive skills insofar as our cultural repertoire is foreign to these texts. As Greene (*Light,* 53) observes, "Reading imitations makes even larger claims on the historical imagination than most reading, and underscores even more cruelly our cultural solitude. It asks us not only to intuit an alien sensibility from the remote *mundus significans,* but also that sensibility's intuitions of a third. Nothing perhaps is more calculated to impress on us our temporal estrangement. Yet nothing perhaps immerses us so forcibly in the flow of literary history; no exercise plunges us so deeply into the currents and eddies of this continuous flow of energy."

7. See Philodemus *On Poetry* 5.32.27–33.7 (Jensen 71–73).

8. Mark 1:1–15 shares several fascinating details with *Odyssey* 1 and 2. See Appendix 2.

9. Mark 3:6.

10. Mark 4:14–19.

11. Mark 5:43.

12. Mark 6:13.

13. Mark 6:14–16.

14. Mark 8:31.

15. Mark 8:34.

16. Mark 9:3.

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"MacDonald shows parallels between Homer and Mark so extensive that a relationship of dependence, conscious or unconscious, must be assumed. This is a radical thesis with great implications for the understanding of the gospels."

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